THE NUN.

BY DIDEROT.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.

DUBLIN:

PRINTED BY BRETT SMITH, NO. 38,
MARY-STREET.

1797.

BRITISH MUSEUM

THE NUN.

THE anſwer of the Marquis of Croiſmaire, if he returns me one, will furniſh me with the firſt lines of this recital. Before I wrote to him, I wiſhed to get a little acquainted with his character. He is a man of the world; he diſtinguiſhed himſelf in the ſervice; he is advanced in years; he has been married; he has a daughter and two ſons, whom he loves, and to whom he is endeared. He is a perſon of birth, of intelligence, of ſpirit, of gaiety, of taſte for the fine arts, and particularly for originality. He is praiſed to me for his ſenſibility, his honour, and his probity: and I find, from all that I have heard, that I have not expoſed myſelf by addreſſing him. But it is not to be preſumed that he will take an intereſt in my fortunes without knowing who I am: and it is this circumſtance which induces me to conquer my pride and my reluctance by undertaking theſe memoirs, in which I deſcribe one part of my misfortunes without

ſkill and without art, with the ſimplicity of a child of my age, and the frankneſs natural to my character. As my protector may require, or perhaps the whim may ſeize me to complete them, at a time when the facts ſhall have ceaſed to be preſent to my memory; I have thought that the cataſtrophe in which they terminate, and the profound impreſſion which it has left upon my mind, and which will never be effaced as long as I live, will ſuffice to bring them accurately to my recollection.

My father was an advocate. He had married my mother when he was conſiderably advanced in life; he had three daughters by her. His fortune was more than adequate to ſettle them comfortably; but for this purpoſe it was neceſſary at leaſt that his affection ſhould be equally divided, and his deficiency in this reſpect I experienced to my coſt. I certainly excelled my ſiſters in the endowments both of mind and perſon, and the ſuperiority of my character and talents ſeemed to be the cauſe of much uneaſineſs to my parents. The advantages which nature and application had conferred upon me above my ſiſters becoming to me a ſource of endleſs chagrin; in order to be loved, endeared, fondled and indulged at all times as they were, I wiſhed from my earlieſt years to exchange characters with them. If a perſon chanced to ſay to my mother, you have charming children... this was never underſtood as applicable to me. I was ſometimes avenged of this injuſtice; but the praiſe which I received always coſt me ſo dear when we were alone, that I would much rather have been wronged: the more that ſtrangers ſhewed a preference for me, the more ill-nature I had to ſubmit to when they were gone. O how often have I lamented not having been born ugly, ſtupid, ſilly, proud, in a word, with all thoſe croſs-grained qualities which recommended them to my parents! I would aſk myſelf, whence can proceed this caprice in a father,

a father, in a mother, in other reſpects virtuous, juſt and pious? Shall I confeſs it to you, Sir? Some expreſſions which eſcaped from my father in his anger (for he was very paſſionate), ſome circumſtances which I have collected at different times, ſome hints of the neighbours, ſome whiſperings of the ſervants, have led me to ſuſpect a reaſon which excuſed them a little. Perhaps my father had ſome doubt reſpecting my birth; perhaps I recalled to my mother a fault which ſhe had committed, or the ingratitude of a man whom ſhe had loved too well: how can I tell? But though all theſe ſuppoſitions be erroneous, what harm is there in communicating them to you? You will burn the letter, and I promiſe to burn your anſwers. As there were but ſhort intervals between our coming into the world, we all three grew up together. We had ſome ſuitors. My eldeſt ſiſter was courted by a charming young man. I ſoon perceived that he took particular notice of me, and that I was becoming the object of his aſſiduities. I felt that this preference would ſoon draw upon me a great deal of ill will, and I told my mother of it. It is perhaps the only thing in my life that ever I did with which ſhe was pleaſed; and this was the way ſhe took to reward me for it. Four days after, or at leaſt in a few days, ſhe informed me that they had determined to ſend me to a convent; and on the next morning I was conducted thither. My ſituation was ſo uncomfortable at home, that this event gave me very little uneaſineſs, and I repaired to St. Mary's, which was my firſt convent, with a great deal of chearfulneſs. In the mean while my ſiſter's gallant, not ſeeing me, forgot me, and became her huſband. His name is Mr. R***: he is a notary, and lives at Corbeil, where they make the moſt unhappy couple in the world. My ſecond ſiſter was married to a Mr. Bauchon, a ſilk-mercer in Quincampoix-ſtreet, at Paris, and lives with him pretty comfortably.

My two ſiſters being ſettled, I ſuppoſed that they would think of me, and that I ſhould get out of the convent. I was then ſixteen and a half years of age. They had given conſiderable portions to my ſiſters; I promiſed myſelf a fortune equal to theirs, and my head was filled wilh flattering ſchemes, when I was ſummoned to the parlour. It was Father Seraphin, my mother's director; he had been mine alſo; ſo that he had no difficulty in explaining to me the motive of his viſit: his object was to make me aſſume the habit of a nun. I remonſtrated againſt this ſtrange propoſition, and plainly declared to him that I had no taſte for the Convent. So much the worſe, ſaid he to me, for your parents have ſo exhauſted their means upon your ſiſters, that I cannot ſee what they can do for you in the narrow circumſtances to which they are reduced. Conſider, Mademoiſelle, you muſt either enter for ever into this houſe, or go to ſome country convent, where they will receive you for a moderate ſalary, and from which you can only depart at the death of your parents, an event for which you may have to wait a long time.... I complained bitterly, and ſhed a flood of tears. The ſuperior was informed of it, and waited my return from the parlour. I was in a confuſion ſeemingly unaccountable. She ſaid to me, And what's the matter with you, my dear child? (ſhe knew better than I did what was the matter.) How you look! But I never ſaw any diſtreſs equal to yours; you make me tremble. Is it becauſe you have loſt your father or mother?—I once thought of throwing myſelf into her arms and ſaying, Would to God!.... I contented myſelf with replying, I have neither father nor mother; I am an unfortunate wretch whom they have forgotten, and whom they wiſh to entomb alive.—She let the ſtorm paſs over, and waited for the moment of returning tranquillity. I explained to her more clearly what had juſt been announced to me. She ſeemed to have pity on me:

ſhe

ſhe embraced me, ſhe encouraged me not to enter into a ſtate for which I had no reliſh; ſhe promiſed to entreat, to remonſtrate, and to ſolicit in my behalf. O Sir! how theſe Superiors are enveloped in artifice! you have no idea of them. In fact ſhe wrote. She well knew the anſwers which they would make her; ſhe communicated them to me: it was a conſiderable time before I began to doubt her ſincerity. In the mean time the period which they had fixed for my declaring my reſolution, arrived; ſhe came and informed me of it with the moſt ſtudied appearance of concern. At firſt ſhe ſtopped without ſpeaking, ſhe then uttered a few accents of ſorrow; after which I diſcovered the reſt. This was ſtill a diſtreſſing ſcene; I ſhall have few of a different kind to deſcribe to you. The art of containing themſelves is that in which of all others they moſt excel. She then ſaid to me (in truth I believe ſhe was crying at the time): Alas! then, my child, you are going to leave us! my dear child, we ſhall never ſee you more!.... and other ejaculations which I did not hear. I threw myſelf down upon a chair; I was ſilent, I cried, I was motionleſs; I roſe and walked about, ſometimes leaning againſt the walls, at other times pouring forth my grief into her boſom. Conceive what I felt when ſhe added: But might not you do one thing? Conſider, but don't you go to ſay that I adviſed you; you can keep a ſecret: I would not for all the world that there was any reproach upon my character. What is it that they deſire of you? that you take the veil? Well! why not take it? What engagement does this lay you under? None; to ſtay two years longer with us. We don't know who may die in the courſe of that time, or who may live it out: two years is a conſiderable period; ſome fortunate circumſtances may intervene before the end of two years..... She accompanied this inſidious propoſal with ſo many careſſes, ſo many proteſtations of friendſhip, ſo many

inſinuating falſehoods! I knew where I was, I did not know where they might put me, and I ſuffered myſelf to be perſuaded. She wrote then to my father; her letter was very well: oh! for this purpoſe it could not have been better: my anxiety, my grief, my remonſtrances, were not diſſembled: I aſſure you that a girl of greater penetration than I was would have been deceived by it. In the mean while the matter was concluded by my giving my conſent. With what expedition every thing was prepared! the day was fixed, my dreſs was made up, the moment of the ceremony arrived without a moment's interval. I forgot to tell you, that I ſaw my father and mother, that I tried every expedient to touch their feelings, and that I found them inflexible. It was a M. Abbe Blin, a Doctor of the Sorbonne, who exhorted me, and M. the Biſhop of Alep, who gave me the dreſs. This ceremony was not gay of itſelf; the day on which it was performed was one of the moſt ſorrowful: though the nuns thronged round to ſupport me, twenty times I felt my knees ſhake, and was like to fall upon the ſteps of the altar. I heard nothing, I ſaw nothing, I was ſtupid; they carried me, and I went; they interrogated me, and they anſwered the queſtions for me. At length this cruel ceremony was concluded; all the ſtrangers withdrew, and I remained among the flock to which I had juſt been united. My companions came round me; they embraced me, and ſaid: But look at my ſiſter, how handſome ſhe is! how this black veil relieves the paleneſs of her complexion! how well this bandeau becomes her! how it rounds her face! how it extends her cheeks! how this habit diſplays her waiſt and her arms!.... I liſtened to them with pain, I was diſtreſſed: at the time I found it neceſſary to agree with them; when I was alone in my cell, I remembered their flatteries, and could not refrain from putting them to the teſt in my little mirror, but I thought them not altogether falſe.

There

There were ſome honours attached to this day; they increaſed them on my account. I paid little attention to them; but they affected to think and ſay the contrary, though it was clear they had no reaſon. At night, on coming out from prayers, the Superior repaired to my cell. Troth, ſaid ſhe after a little conſideration, I know not why you expreſſed ſo much reluctance to aſſume this dreſs; it makes you a wonder, you are quite charming; Siſter Suſan is a very pretty Nun: we ſhall love you the better for that. Here, let us ſee you walk.... You don't keep your ſelf upright enough, it is not neceſſary that you ſtoop.... She ſet right my head, feet, hands, waiſt, and arms, it was almoſt as good as a leſſon of Marcelle upon the monaſtic graces, for every condition has its own. She then ſat down, and ſaid to me: It is very well; but let us now talk a little ſeriouſly. Before the lapſe of two years your parents my have altered their reſolution; and even you yourſelf may wiſh to remain here when they wiſh to take you away; this is not impoſſible.—Madam, don't believe it.—You have been a long time amongſt us, but you are ſtill unacquainted with our mode of life; it certainly has its pains, but it alſo has its pleaſures.... You doubt the truth of every thing I ſay of the world and of the cloiſter, but every condition bears the ſame inſcription; for I thank God! they made me read all the monks have ſaid of their ſtate, which they know well, and which they deteſt; and of the world, which they love, againſt which they rail, but with which they are unacquainted.

I ſhall not enter into a long detail reſpecting my noviciate: if it were a fair ſpecimen of the auſterity of the convent, one could not have ſo much objection to it, but it is the moſt pleaſant period of the monaſtic life. A mother of novices is the moſt indulgent ſiſter that they can find. She makes it her ſtudy to diveſt the condition of every thing that is unpleaſant:

it is a courſe of the moſt artful and refined ſeduction. She thickens the ſurrounding darkneſs, ſhe lulls you into tranquillity, ſhe decoys you into her ſnares, ſhe faſcinates you. Ours was particularly attached to me. I do not believe that any young ſoul without experience could be proof againſt this fatal art. The world has its precipices, but I dont imagine that the deſcent to them is ſo eaſy. If I had a cold, my preſence was diſpenſed with at ſervice, at penance, and at prayers; I went early to bed, I roſe late, I was exempted from diſcipline. Conceive, Sir, that there were ſome days in which I would have ſighed for the moment of ſacrificing myſelf. There are no diſtreſſing occurrences which paſs in the world of which they do not ſpeak to you; they arrange facts, they fabricate ſtories, and then it is praiſes without end, and the operation of the grace of God, which prevent you from incurring theſe humiliating diſgraces. In the mean while, the period drew near which I had ſometimes haſtened by my wiſhes. Then I awaked from my dream; I felt my reluctance return with increaſed ſtrength. I went to inform the ſuperior, or the mother of our novices. Theſe women take ample vengeance for the trouble you occaſion them: for it is not to be thought that they have any amuſement in the hypocritical part which they act, as from the fooliſh things which they are under the neceſſity of ſo often repeating to you, the taſk becomes in the end ſtale and diſguſting to them; but they undertake it for the ſake of bringing a thouſand crowns into their houſe. This is the important object for which they lead a life of deceit, and prepare forty or fifty years of deſpair, and perhaps eternal miſery for young innocents: for it is certain, that of every hundred nuns who die before they reach the age of fifty, there are fifty damned, excluſive of thoſe who become fooliſh, ſtupid, or mad in the proſpect.

One

One day, a nun of the laſt deſcription happened to eſcape from the cell in which ſhe was confined. I ſaw her. This, Sir, is the moment in which my good or bad fortune muſt be irrevocably fixed, according as you act by me. I never ſaw any thiug ſo frightful. Her hair was diſhevelled, and her body almoſt naked; ſhe dragged iron chains; her eyes were wild, ſhe tore her hair, ſhe beat her breaſt with her fiſts; ſhe ran, ſhe roared; ſhe imprecated upon herſelf and others the moſt dreadful curſes; ſhe wanted to throw herſelf out at a window. Terror ſeized me, I trembled at every joint, I ſaw my fate in that of this unfortunate wretch, and I immediately reſolved in my mind to die a thouſand times rather than to encounter it. They perceived the effect which this incident would have upon my ſpirits, and they endeavoured to prevent it. They told me I know not how many abſurd and contradictory ſtories about this nun: that her intellects were deranged before ſhe came to the houſe; that ſhe had had a terrible fright at a critical time; that ſhe had become a ſubject to viſions; that ſhe thought ſhe held intercourſe with angels; that ſome preachers of an extravagant morality had ſo terrified her about the judgments of God, that her diſordered brain had been turned by the deſcription; that ſhe ſaw nothing but demons, hell, and gulphs of fire: that they had been very unlucky; that it was a thing quite unheard of before in their houſe, and I know not what. This made no impreſſion upon me. Every moment the mad nun recurred to my mind, and I renewed the oath of never taking a vow.

The period arrived at which it became neceſſary for me to ſhow whether I could keep my word. One morning after ſervice, the Superior entered my cell. She held a letter in her hand. Her looks were ſorrowful and dejected. Her arms ſunk; it ſeemed as if ſhe had not power to lift up the letter; ſhe looked

at

at me; tears ſtood in her eyes; we were both ſilent; ſhe waited till I ſhould ſpeak; I was tempted to begin firſt, but I contained myſelf. She aſked me how I did; ſhe obſerved that ſervice had been uery long to-day: that I had a little cough; that I appeared to be indiſpoſed. To all this I anſwered—No, my dear mother. She ſtill kept the letter in her hand, which was hanging down; while ſhe was putting theſe queſtions, ſhe put it upon her knee, and her hand in part concealed it; at laſt, after having put ſome queſtions reſpecting my father and mother, finding that I did not aſk what this paper was, ſhe ſaid, Here is a letter..... When ſhe uttered this word, I felt my heart quake, and I added in a trembling voice: Is it from my mother? —It is; take and read it... —I recovered myſelf a little; I took the letter: I read it at firſt with tolerable firmneſs; but as I advanced, terror, indignation, reſentment, contempt, ſucceeding one another in my breaſt, I diſplayed different tones, different voices, and different motions. Sometimes I ſcarcely held the paper, at other times I held it as if I meant to tear it, and at other times I graſped it with violence, as if I had been tempted to twiſt it in my hand and throw it away.—Alas! my child, what anſwer ſhall we make to this?—Madam, you know beſt,—No, I do not know. The times are unfortunate, your family has ſuſtained ſome loſſes; your ſiſter's affairs are embarraſſed; they both have a number of children; your parents impoveriſhed themſelves by marrying them, they are ruining themſelves in order to ſupport them. It is impoſſible that they can make any permanent ſettlement upon you; you have aſſumed the habit, they have been at ſome expence; by taking this ſtep you have made them conceive ſome hopes; they have announced ta their acquaintances, that you are immediately about to commence the profeſſion. At all events, you may depend upon every aſſiſtance which I can give you. I have never

enticed

enticed any perſon into a convent: it is a ſtate into which we are conducted by the voice of God, and it is extremely dangerous to blend our voice with his. I ſhall never attempt to ſpeak to your heart, if grace is ſilent; hitherto I never have had to reproach myſelf with the misfortunes of any perſon, and I ſhould not wiſh to begin with you, my child, you who are ſo dear to me. I have not forgotten that it was at my perſuaſion that you took the firſt ſteps, and I will not ſuffer them to take advantage of this to bring you into engagements contrary to your inclination. Let us conſider then together, let us concert. Do you wiſh to make profeſſion?—No, Madam.—You have no reliſh for the religious ſtate?—No, Madam.—You will not obey your parents?—No, Madam.—What do you wiſh to be then?—Any thing but a nun. I do not wiſh to be one, I will not be one.—Well, you ſhall not be one. Let us deliberate and draw up an anſwer to your mother....—We agreed in ſome ideas. She wrote, and ſhowed me the anſwer, which ſeemed to be very proper. In the mean time, they ſent the director of the houſe to me; they ſent me the doctor who had pronounced the diſcourſe in my praiſe when I aſſumed the habit: they recommended me to the mother of the novices; I ſaw M. the Biſhop of Alep; I had to enter the liſts with ſome pious women whom I did not know, but who took an intereſt in my affairs; I had continual conferences with monks and prieſts; my father came, my ſiſters wrote to me; at laſt my mother appeared: I reſiſted them all. In the mean while, the day was fixed for my profeſſion: they omitted nothing to obtain my conſent; but when they ſaw that all their ſolicitations were to no purpoſe, they reſolved to proceed wtthout it.

They ſhut me up in my cell, they impoſed ſilence upon me; I was ſeparated from all the world, abandoned to myſelf; and I ſaw that they were determined to diſpoſe of me without conſulting me any farther

farther. I did not wiſh to take the vows, it was a ſettled point with me; and all the falſe or real terrors which they inflicted upon me, did not ſhake my purpoſe. In the mean time I was in a moſt deplorable ſtate, I did not know how long it might laſt; and if it ceaſed, I knew ſtill leſs what was to become of me. Amid theſe uncertainties, I adopted a plan of conduct of which you will form whatever judgment, Sir, you pleaſe. I ſaw no perſon, neither the ſuperior, nor the mother of the novices, nor my companions. I ſent notice to the firſt, pretending to be reconciled to the will of my parents; but my deſign was to put an end to this perſecution, by rendering it notorious, and publicly to proteſt againſt the violent meaſures which they had in contemplation. I ſaid that ſhe was miſtreſs of my fortune, that ſhe might diſpoſe of it according to her wiſhes, that ſhe might require of me to take the vows, and I ſhould do it. Conceive the joy which was diffuſed through the whole houſe, the careſſes renewed with every ſpecies of flattery and ſeduction. "God had ſpoken to my heart, there "was no perſon fitter than I for the ſtate of per- "fection. It was impoſſible for this not to happen, "they had always expected it. Thoſe did not diſ- "charge their duty with ſo much profit and conſtancy "who were not really called. The mother of the "novices had never ſeen, in any of her pupils, a "call ſo truly characteriſtic; ſhe was quite ſurpriſed "at the croſs fit that I had taken, but ſhe had always "told our mother ſuperior to perſevere, and that it "would paſs over; that the beſt nuns had moments "of a ſimilar kind, that they proceeded from ſuggeſti- "ons of the evil ſpirit, who always redoubled his "efforts when he was on the point of loſing his prey; "that I was about to make my eſcape from him; that "my path henceforth would be ſtrewed with roſes; "that the reſtraints of the religious life would ap- "pear to me to be the more ſupportable, becauſe I

had

" had greatly exaggerated them; that this ſudden preſſ-
" ure of the yoke was a favour of heaven, for the pur-
" poſe of afterwards lightening it....." It appear-
ed to me rather ſingular that the ſame thing ſhould proceed from God and the Devil, according as they might think proper to view it. There are many circumſtances ſimilar to this which occur in the convent; and I have often been told, by way of conſolation by ſome, that my thoughts were the inſtigations of Satan, and by others, that they were the inſpirations of God. The ſame evil proceeds from God by whom we are tried, and from the Devil by whom we are tempted.

I conducted myſelf with prudence. I thought I could anſwer for myſelf. I ſaw my father, he ſpoke to me coldly; I ſaw my mother, ſhe embraced me; I received letters of congratulation from my ſiſters, and a great many others. I knew that it would be a M. Sornen, Vicar of Saint-Roch, who would preach the ſermon, and M. Thierry, Chancellor of the Univerſity, who would receive my vows Every thing went on well till the evening before the important day; only after being informed that the ceremony would be private, that there would be few people there, and that the church-door would be open only to my parents, I invited, by means of the maid of the turning-box, every perſon in the neighbourhood, my male and female friends; I had permiſſion to write to ſome of my acquaintances. All this company, whom they did not expect, preſented themſelves; it was ueceſſary to permit them to come in, and the aſſembly was almoſt as numerous as my plan required. O Sir! what a dreadful nrght the preceding was to me! I did not lie down. I ſat upon my bed, I raiſed my hands to heaven, and called God to witneſs the violence which they were going to offer me. I repreſented to myſelf the part which I was to act at the foot of the altar—a young girl loudly proteſting againſt

an

an action to which ſhe ſeemed to have conſented: the ſcandal of the by-ſtanders, the diſtreſs of the nuns, the fury of my parents. O God! what is to become of me?..... While I was pronouncing theſe words I was ſeized with a general faintneſs, I fell in a ſwoon upon my bolſter; a general coldneſs, in which my knees ſhook, and my teeth chattered, ſucceeded the ſwoon, and this coldneſs was followed by a burning heat. My mind was troubled. I do not remember undreſſing myſelf, nor going out of my cell; but I was found naked in my ſhift, ſtretched upon the ground at the door of my Superior, motionleſs, and almoſt dead. I have learned theſe things ſince. In the morning I found myſelf in my cell with the Superior, the mother of the novices, and ſome of thoſe whom they call aſſiſtants, round my bed. I was very much diſtreſſed. They put ſome queſtions to me; they ſaw from my anſwers that I had no knowledge of what had paſſed, and they did not tell me of it. They aſked me how I did, if I perſiſted in my holy reſolution, and if I found myſelf in a condition to ſupport the fatigue of the day. I anſwered in the affirmative, and, contrary to their expectation, no derangement of the plan took place.

Every thing had been arranged on the preceding evening. They rung the bells to let the world know that they were about to add another to the liſt of the unfortunate. They came to dreſs me; it was a toilette day. Now, when I recollect all theſe ceremonies, there ſeems to be in them ſomething ſolemn and affecting for a young innocent, whoſe inclination is not averſe to them. They conducted me to the church, they performed high maſs. The good Vicar, who gave me credit for a reſignation which I did not poſſeſs, preached a long ſermon, which was every word inapplicable to me: there was ſomething very ridiculous in what he ſaid of my happineſs, my grace, my courage, my zeal, my fervour, and all thoſe fine

ſentiments

ſentiments which he ſuppoſed that I felt. In the mean while, the contraſt between this eulogium and the ſtep which I was about to take, troubled me; I was ſtaggered for a few moments, but my uncertainty did not laſt long. It only taught me better than I had learnt before, that I was deficient in thoſe qualities which are neceſſary to conſtitute a good nun. At laſt the dreadful moment arrived. When it was neceſſary for me to enter the place, where I was to take the vows, I could not walk; two of my companions took me by the arms, and, with my head leaning upon one of them, they dragged me along. I knew not what paſſed in the hearts of the by-ſtanders; but at the ſight of a young victim carried dying to the altar, on ail ſides ſighs and ſobbings burſt forth, among which, I am ſure, thoſe of my father and mother were not heard. The aſſembly roſe up: there were ſome young perſons mounted upon the chairs, and hanging by the bars of the railing; a profound ſilence was obſerved, and the prieſt who preſided at my profeſſion ſaid to me: Maria-Suſannah Simonin, do you promiſe to tell the truth?—I promiſe.—Do you come here of your own accord, with good will? I anſwered, No; but thoſe who accompanied me anſwered, Yes.—Maria-Suſannah Simonin, do you promiſe to God, chaſtity, poverty, and obedience?—I heſitated a moment, the prieſt waited, and I replied, No, Sir. —He repeated: Maria Suſannah Simonin, do you promiſe to God, chaſtity, poverty, and obedience? I replied in a firmer tone: No, Sir, no.—He ſtopped, and ſaid to me: Recollect yourſelf, my child, and liſten to me.—Sir, ſaid I to him, you aſk me if I promiſe to God, chaſtity, poverty, and obedience? I underſtood you perfectly, and I anſwered you, no.... And turning round to the by-ſtanders, among whom conſiderable murmuring had ariſen, I made a ſign that I wiſhed to ſpeak; the murmurs ceaſed, and I ſaid: "Sirs, and you in particular, my father and mother,

"I take

"I take you all to witneſs....." When I uttered theſe words, one of the ſiſters let fall the veil over the railing, and I ſaw that it was to no purpoſe to ſpeak. The nuns ſurrounded me, and loaded me with reproaches; I heard them without ſaying a word. They conducted to my cell, where they locked me in.

Being left alone to my reflections, I began to take courage and to conſider my conduct, of which I did not repent. I ſaw that, after the notoriety which I had occaſioned, it was impoſſible I could remain long here, and that perhaps they would not dare to take me back into the convent. I did not know what they intended to do with me, but I was ſenſible there was nothing worſe than for one to become a nun contrary to inclination. I lived in confinement without hearing a ſingle word from any perſon. Thoſe who brought me my victuals, came in, put my dinner down upon the floor, and went away without ſpeaking. In about a month they brought me a ſecular habit, when I put off that of the houſe; the Superior came, and told me to follow her. I followed her to the door of the convent, where I went into a carriage; I there found my mother alone, waiting for me; I ſat down before her, and the carriage ſet off. We continued oppoſite one another for ſome time, without ſaying a word: I kept my eyes downward, and did not preſume to look her in the face. I know not what paſſed in my mind, but all on a ſudden, I threw myſelf at her feet, and leaned my head upon her knees: I ſaid nothing, but ſobbed till I was almoſt ſtifled. She repelled me harſhly without ſpeaking. I did not riſe; the blood ſprang from my noſe; I ſeized one of her hands in ſpite of her, and bathing it with a ſtream of blood and tears, putting my mouth upon her hand, I kiſſed it, and ſaid to her: You are ſtill my mother, I am ſtill your child.... She anſwered me, puſhing me from her with greater violence,

violence, and tearing her hand from between mine at the ſame time: Riſe, wretch, riſe.—I obeyed her, I roſe up, and drew my hood over my face. She had aſſumed ſuch an air of authority and ſternneſs, that I dared not look at her. My tears, and the blood which flowed from my noſe mingling together, ran down my arms till I was all beſmeared before I was aware of it. From ſome words that ſhe dropt, I conceived that her robe and linen were ſtained with it, and that this offended her. We arrived at the houſe, where I was conducted to a ſmall room which was prepared for me. I threw myſelf down upon my knees on the ſtair-caſe: I held by her clothes; but all that I could obtain from her was a contemptuous caſt of the head, with an expreſſion of indignation from her mouth and eyes, which you can conceive better than I can deſcribe.

I entered my new priſon, where I paſſed ſix months, ſoliciting in vain the favour of ſpeaking to her, of ſeeing my father, or of writing to them. I was ſerved with proviſions and attended: a domeſtic accompanied me to maſs on holy days, and locked me up. I read, I worked, I wept, I ſung, and in this manner did I paſs my days. A ſecret ſentiment ſupported me, and it was the conſciouſneſs that I was free, and that my lot, cruel as it was, might change. But it was decided that I was to be a Nun, and I was one.

So much inhumanity, ſo much obſtinacy on the part of my parents, completely confirmed the ſuſpicion I had entertained reſpecting my birth. I could never find any other principles on which they could be excuſed. My mother ſeemed to fear leſt I ſhould one day object to the mode in which they had divided their property, leſt I ſhould demand my legitim, and aſſociate a natural child with legitimate offspring. But what was only conjecture, is in time to be realized.

While

While I was confined in the houſe, I performed few exterior exerciſes of religion, yet I was always ſent to confeſſion on the eve of great holidays; I have mentioned that I had the ſame director as my mother. I converſed with him, I explained all the rigour of treatment which I had experienced from my parents for about three years. He was acquainted with it all. I complained particularly of my mother with bitterneſs and reſentment. This prieſt had entered late into the religious ſtate; he was humane. He heard me with tranquillity, and ſaid to me: My child, pity your mother, pity ſtill more than you blame her. Her heart is good; be aſſured that it is againſt her will that ſhe acts in this manner.—Againſt her will, Sir! and who can conſtrain her to obſerve this conduct? Did ſhe not give me birth? and what difference is there between my ſiſters and me?—A great deal!—I don't underſtand the meaning of your anſwer..... I was proceeding in a compariſon between my ſiſters and me, when he ſtopped me and ſaid: Go, go, inhumanity is not the vice of your parents; endeavour to bear your lot with patience, and at leaſt to make it a merit before God. I will ſee your mother, and be aſſured that to ſerve you, I will uſe all the aſcendancy which I poſſeſs over her mind..... That *great deal* which he had mentioned, was a ray of light. I no longer doubted the truth of what I had thought concerning my birth.

The Saturday following, about half paſt five in the evening, when day was almoſt gone, the ſervant girl who was employed to ſerve me, came up ſtairs and ſaid: Madam, your mother ſays that you muſt dreſs.... An hour after: Madam ſays that you muſt go down ſtairs with me..... At the door I found a coach, which the ſervant and I entered, and I learnt that we were going to the Feuillans, to Father Seraphin. He expected us, he was alone. The domeſtic retired, and I entered the parlour. I ſat down,

uneaſy

uneasy and curious to hear what he had to tell me. He spoke to me as follows: The severe conduct of your parents is about to be explained to you; I have obtained your mother's permission. You are discreet; you have spirit and firmness; you are of an age when you might even be entrusted with a secret, in which you were not yourself concerned. It is a long while since I first advised your mother to reveal to you that with which you are to be made acquainted; but she could never summon resolution for the task. It is hard for a mother to confess to a child a serious fault; you know her character; it does not consist with that species of humiliation which a certaiu avowal would involve. She imagined that without this resource she would be able to bring you to her views; she has been mistaken; the circumstance has grieved her. She now recurs to my advice, and she herself has given me orders to announce to you, that you are not the daughter of M. Simonin.—I instantly replied, I had suspected it.—Consider now, Mademoiselle, observe, weigh, judge whether your mother could without the consent, or even with the consent of your father, place you upon an equal footing with children whose sister you are not; if she could confess to your father a fact of which already he entertains but too much suspicion.—But Sir, who is my father?—Mademoiselle, that is a point with which I have not been entrusted. It is too certain, Mademoiselle, continued he, that your sisters have obtained prodigious pecuniary advantages over you, and that every imaginable precaution has been taken by marriage contracts, by the dilapidation of their property, by stipulations, by trust deeds, and other methods, to reduce your legitim to nothing, in case you should one day appeal to the laws to make it effectual. If you lose your parents, you will gain little by the event. You refuse a convent; perhaps you will regret that you are not there.—That is impossible, Sir, I ask nothing.—You

do not yet know hardſhips, labour, indigence.—I know at leaſt the value of liberty, and the importance of a ſituation which we are not called to embrace.—I have told you what I had to communicate: it belongs to you, Mademoiſelle, to make your reflections..... He then roſe—Sir, yet one queſtion more.—As many as you pleaſe.—Are my ſiſters acquainted with what you have told me?—No, Mademoiſelle.—How then could they have brought themſelves to the reſolution of plundering their ſiſter? for ſuch they conſider me.—Ah, Mademoiſelle, intereſt! intereſt! they could not otherwiſe have obtained the conſiderable marriages they have found. In the world all conſider themſelves only, and I adviſe you not to reckon upon them if you loſe your parents. Be aſſured they will diſpute to a farthing the little portion to be ſhared among you. They have a number of children. This pretext will be ſufficiently plauſible to reduce you to beggary. Beſides, it is no longer in their power to do any thing; every thing is conducted by their huſbands. Although they might entertain ſome ſentiments of commiſeration, the ſupplies they might afford you without the knowledge of their huſbands, would prove a ſource of domeſtic diviſions. I can only ſee two alternatives, that even legitimate children are to be abandoned, or children to be ſupplied at the expence of domeſtic peace. The bread of charity too, Mademoiſelle, is very unpalatable. If you truſt to my advice, you will reconcile yourſelf to your parents; you will do what your mother has a right to expect from you; you will enter a convent; a ſmall penſion will be ſettled upon you, with which you will paſs your days, if not happily, at leaſt tolerably. In ſhort, I will not conceal from you that the apparent ſtate of deſertion in which you are left by your mother, her obſtinacy in confining you in a convent, and ſome other circumſtances which at preſent I do not recollect, though I knew them at the time, have produced

duced upon your father the very ſame effect as upon you. He had entertained ſuſpicions of your birth, but it is ſuſpicion no longer; and without being acquainted with the ſecret, he has no doubt that you only belong to him as a child by the law, which aſcribes them to the perſon who bears the name of huſband. Go, Mademoiſelle, you are virtuous and conſiderate, reflect upon what you have now heard.

I roſe, and burſt into tears. I ſaw that the father himſelf was ſoftened: he mildly raiſed his eyes to heaven, and led me back. I rejoined the domeſtic who had accompanied me; we entered the carriage, and returned to the houſe. It was late. I muſed for a part of the night upon the ſecret which had been revealed to me; I continued to think upon it in the courſe of the next day. I had no father; ſcruples had deprived me of a mother; precautions were taken to defeat my claim to the rights of my legal birth; was in a rigid domeſtic captivity, without hope, without reſource. Perhaps if this explanation had been ſooner made, after my ſiſters were ſettled, had they kept me in the houſe which continued to be frequented, ſome one might have been found to whom my character, my ſpirit, my figure, my talents, would have appeared a ſufficient dowry. The thing was not yet impoſſible, but the noiſe I had excited in the convent, rendered it more unlikely. It was not eaſy to be conceived that a girl of between ſeventeen and eighteen years of age could proceed to ſuch extremities without a firmneſs very uncommon. Men are loud in their praiſes of this quality, but I think they willingly diſpenſe with it in thoſe whom they intend to eſpouſe. This, however, was a reſource to be attempted before any other alternative was embraced. I adopted that of diſcloſing my ſentiments to my mother, and I requeſted a converſation with her, which was granted.

It

It was in winter. She was ſeated in an arm chair before the fire; her countenance was ſtern, her eye fixed, and her features unmoved. I approached her, I threw myſelf at her feet, and I aſked pardon for all the faults I had committed. It is by what you are now to tell me, anſwered ſhe, that you may deſerve it. Riſe; your father's abſence gives you an opportunity to explain yourſelf. You have ſeen Father Seraphin; you now know who you are, and what you may expect from me, if your deſign is not to puniſh me the whole of my life for a fault which I have already but too dearly expatiated. Well, then, Mademoiſelle, what do you wiſh me to do? What have you reſolved?—Mamma, replied I, know that I have nothing, and that I ought to pretend to nothing. I am very far from being diſpoſed to add to your ſufferings, of whatever nature they may be. Perhaps you would have found me more ſubmiſſive to your will, had you informed me ſooner of certain circumſtances which it was difficult for me to ſuſpect; but now I know them; I have learnt who I am, and it only remains for me to conduct myſelf ſuitably io my ſituation. I am no longer ſurpriſed at the diſtinctions which have been made between my ſiſters and me; I am ſenſible of their juſtice, and I ſubſcribe to it; but ſtill I am your child; you have carried me in your boſom, and I hope you will never forget that endearing circumſtance.—May I periſh, added ſhe with emotion, if I have not acknowledged you as much as it was in my power!—Alas, Madam, ſaid I, beſtow upon me your kindneſs, give me your countenance, reſtore me the tenderneſs of him who thinks himſelf my father.—He is almoſt as certain of your birth, replied ſhe, as you and I. I never ſee you beſide him without enduring his reproaches; he directs them againſt me by the ſeverity with which he treats you: do not expect from him the ſentiments of a tender father. And, may I acknowledge it to you? you remind

remind me of a treachery, an ingratitude, ſo odious on the part of another, that the idea of him is inſupportable. This man conſtantly ſteps in between you and me, he repels me, and the hatred I owe to him lights upon you.—What? ſaid I, muſt I not hope that you and M. Simonin will treat me even as a ſtranger, as one unknown, whom humanity might have induced you to ſhelter —Neither of us can do it. Do not any longer, my daughter, poiſon the enjoyment of my life. If you had no ſiſters, I know what I ſhould do; but you have two, and they have numerous families. The paſſion by which I was long ſupported is extinguiſhed, conſcience has reſumed its right.... But he, to whom I owe my life.... he is no more, he is dead without remembering you, and that is the leaſt of his crimes.... Here her figure changed, her eyes flamed, indignation overſpread her countenance; ſhe attempted to ſpeak, but ſhe could not articulate, the trembling of her lips would not permit her. She was ſeated; ſhe leaned her head upon her hands, to conceal from me the violent emotions that paſſed within her breaſt. She remained ſome time in this ſituation. She then roſe; ſhe took two or three rounds through the room without ſaying a word; ſhe would have wept, but her tears refuſed to flow, and ſhe ſaid: Monſter! it was not his fault that you were not ſmothered in my womb, by the ſufferings he coſt me; but God has preſerved us both, that the mother might expiate her error in the perſon of the child. My daughter you have nothing, and you ever will have nothing. The little I can do for you I conceal from your ſiſters; ſuch are the conſequences of a weakneſs. Yet I hope to have nothing with which to reproach myſelf at my death; I ſhall have gained your dowry by my

economy. I do not abuſe the goodneſs of my huſband, but every day I ſet apart what I occaſionally receive from his liberality. I have ſold all the jewels I poſſeſſed, and he has allowed me to diſpoſe of the produce as I think proper. I loved play, I now play no more. I was fond of ſpectacles, I have deprived myſelf of this pleaſure, I was fond of company, I live retired. I loved ſplendour, and that too I have renounced. If you take the vows according to my wiſh, and that of M. Simonin, your dowry will be the fruit of my daily retrenchments.—But, Madam, ſaid I, this houſe is ſtill viſited by men of property; perhaps there may be found among them, one who, ſatisfied with my perſon, will not require the ſavings which you have deſtined for my ſettlement.—You muſt think of that no more; the attention you excited has undone you.—Is the evil without remedy?—Without remedy.—But if I do not find a huſband, is it neccſſary that I ſhould ſhut myſelf up in a convent?—Unleſs you wiſh to perpetuate my ſorrow and my remorſe till my eyes are cloſed. To this point muſt I come: your ſiſters will be round my bed at that terrible moment: think, if I was to ſee you among them, what would be the effect of your preſence in theſe laſt moments! My daughter, for ſuch you are in ſpite of me, your ſiſters have obtained from the laws a name which you only derive from guilt; do not torment a dying mother; allow her to ſink peaceably into the tomb; let her be able to ſay to herſelf when ſhe is about to appear before the great Judge, that ſhe has repaired her fault as far as ſhe could; allow her to flatter herſelf, that after her death you will not introduce trouble into the family, and that you will not attempt to vindicate rights which you do not poſſeſs.—Mamma, ſaid I, be eaſy upon that head; ſend for a lawyer, let him draw

draw up an inſtrument of renunciation, and I will ſubſcribe whatever you pleaſe.—That is impoſſible; children cannot diſinherit themſelves; this is the chaſtiſement of a father and mother juſtly incenſed. If it ſhould pleaſe God to ſummon me hence to-morrow, to-morrow ſhould I be compelled, in that extremity, to open myſelf to my huſband, in order to take in concert the ſame meaſures. Do not expoſe me to an indiſcretion which would render me odious in his eyes, and which would involve conſequences by which you would be diſhonoured. If you ſurvive me, you will remain without a name, without fortune, and without conſideration; unfortunate wretch, tell me what is to become of you! what ideas do you wiſh me to carry with me at my death? I muſt then tell your father..... What am I to tell him? That you are not hischild!... My daughter, could I, by falling at your feet, prevail upon you..... but you have no feeling, you have the inflexible ſoul of your father..... At this moment M. Simonin entered; he perceived the diſorder of my mother; he was fond of her; he was paſſionate; he ſtopped ſhort, and darting a fierce glance at me, he ſaid, Be gone. Had he been my father, I would not have obeyed him, but he was not. He added, addreſſing himſelf to the domeſtic who lighted me, Tell her never again to appear.

I ſhut myſelf up in my little priſon. I muſed upon what my mother had told me I dropped down upon my knees; I prayed to God to inſtruct me; I prayed long; I remained with my face fixed to the ground. We ſeldom invoke the voice of heaven, but when we are in a ſtate of doubt, and it almoſt advices us to obey. This was the alternative I embraced. My parents wiſh me to become a nun; perhaps too it is the will of God; alas!

I will be one; ſince I am to be wretched, of what importance is it where I am!.... I entreated the girl who waited on me, to inform me when my father went out. Next day I aſked my mother's permiſſion to ſee her; ſhe anſwered, that ſhe promiſed M. Simonin that ſhe would not, but that I might write to her with a crayon which was given me. I wrote then upon a piece of paper [that fatal paper has been recovered, and it has been employed againſt me but too ſucceſsfully]: "Mamma, "I am ſorry for all the vexations I have occaſioned "you; I aſk your pardon; I propoſe to put an "end to them. Diſpoſe of me as you pleaſe; if "it is your will that I ſhould take the vows, I hope "alſo it is the will of God...." The ſervant took this note, and carried it to my mother. She came up ſtairs again a moment after, and ſaid to me with tranſport: Mademoiſelle, ſince bnt a ſingle word was neceſſary to make your father, your mother, and yourſelf happy, why did you require to be entreated ſo long? My maſter and miſtreſs look ſo as I have never ſeen them ſince I came here: they quarrelled continually about you; thank God, I ſhall ſee it no more.... While ſhe ſpoke to me, I thought I had ſigned my death-warrant; and this preſentiment, Sir, will be fulfilled if you abandon me. Some days elapſed without my hearing any thing; but one morning, about nine o'clock, M. Simonin abruptly opened my door, and entered in his night-gown and night-cap. Since I had known that he was not my father, his preſence only inſpired me with terror. I roſe and paid him my reſpects. It ſeemed to me as if I had two hearts. I could not think of my mother without emotion, without feeling an inclination to ſhed tears; it was not ſo with regard to M. Simonin. It is certain that a father inſpires a kind of ſentiment which we feel

for

for nobody in the world but him; this cannot be underſtood but by thoſe who have found themſelves, like me, in the preſence of a man who had long ſuſtained, and had juſt loſt that auguſt character. Others will ever remain ignorant of it. If I paſſed from his preſence into that of my mother, I ſeemed to be another perſon. He ſaid to me: Suſan, do you acknowledge that billet? Yes, Sir.—Did you write it freely?—I cannot ſay that I did.—Are you at leaſt reſolved to execute what it promiſes?—I am.—Have you no predilection for any particular convent?—No: they are indifferent to me.—It is enough.

Such were my anſwers, but unfortunately they were not written. For a whole fortnight I heard nothing upon the ſubject, and I ſuppoſed that they had applied to different religious houſes, and that the ſcandal my conduct had excited, prevented my being received in the ſituation of a candidate. They were leſs ſcrupulous at Longchamp, doubtleſs becauſe it was inſinuated to them that I underſtood muſic and had a good voice. The difficulties which had been encountered, and the favour I received in being admitted into this houſe, were greatly exaggerated; I was even prevailed upon to write to the Superior. I was not aware of the conſequences of the evidence by writing which was required of me; they too were afraid it would have ſeemed that I might one day retract my vows. They wiſhed to have an atteſtation under my own hands, that they had been voluntary. Without ſuch a motive how could this letter, which ought to have remained in the hands of the Superior, have paſſed in the ſequel into the poſſeſſion of my brothers in law? But let us quickly ſhut our eyes on this ſcene: it ſhews me M. Simonin in a view, under which I no longer wiſh to conſider him;—he is no more. I was conducted

ducted to Longchamp, accompanied by my mother. I did not even aſk leave to bid M. Simonin adieu; the thought of it, I confeſs, never occurred till I was upon the road. I was expected. I was introduced by my hiſtory, and by my talents. They ſaid nothing to me of the one, but they were eager to aſcertain whether the aequaintance they had made was of any importance. After they had talked of a variety of indifferent things (for, after what had happened, you may well imagine they neither ſpoke to me of God, nor of my call, nor of the dangers of the world, nor of the calmneſs of the religious life; and that they did not venture to utter a ſingle word of that pious common-place talk in which theſe firſt moments are generally employed), the Superior ſaid: Mademoiſelle, you underſtand muſic; you ſing; we have a harpſichord; if you pleaſe, we will go to the parlour..... My ſoul was wrung with agony; but this was not the time to diſplay reluctance: my mother went firſt, I followed, and the Superior cloſed the train, with ſome nuns whom curioſity had attracted. It was night. They brought me candles. I ſat down at the harpſichord. I made a great many flouriſhes, while I endeavoured to recollect a piece of muſic, of which I had plenty, and yet I could not hit upon one; the Superior, however, preſſed me; and without any artifice, by mere habit, becauſe the piece was familiar to me, I ſung: *Sad array, flambeaux pale, day more diſmal than the night, &c.* I don't know what effect this produced, but they did not liſten to me long; I was interrupted by praiſes, which I was a good deal ſurpriſed to have merited ſo ſoon, and at ſo little expence. My mother conſigned me to the care of the Superior, gave me her hand to kiſs, and departed.

I was now in another houſe, a nun, and a candidate for admiſſion, and with every appearance of ſoliciting

ſoliciting this admiſſion from the unbiaſſed inclination of my own will. But you, Sir, who are acquainted with every thing that paſſed up to this moment, what do you think of the ſubject? Moſt of theſe things were not alledged when I wiſhed to retract my vows; ſome of them, becauſe they were truths deſtitute of proof, others, becauſe they would have rendered me odious without ſerving my cauſe. I ſhould only have been conſidered as an unnatural child who ſullied the memory of my parents to obtain my liberty. They were in poſſeſſion of the proof of what was *againſt* me; what was *for* me could neither be brought forward nor proved. I was unwilling that even the ſuſpicion of my birth ſhould be inſinuated to the judges. My counſel wiſhed to ſummon in evidence my mother's director and mine; but from the ſame motives, much leſs would I permit this to be done. But, by the way, leſt I ſhould forget, and leſt the deſire of ſerving me ſhould prevent you from making the reflection, under the correction of your better judgment, I believe that it would be wiſer to ſay nothing of my ſkill in muſic, and my playing upon the harpſichord. Nothing more would be required to betray my condition. The oſtentation of theſe talents does not conſiſt with the obſcurity and the repoſe which I ſeek. Thoſe in my ſituation do not poſſeſs them, and it is proper that I too ſhould ſeem ignorant. If I am conſtrained to exile myſelf from my country, they will prove a reſource to me. Exile myſelf from my country! Tell me why I revolt from the idea? It is becauſe I know not where to go; becauſe I am young, and deſtitute of experience; beeauſe I dread mankind and vice; becauſe I have always lived recluſe, and that if I were out of Paris, I ſhould conſider myſelf loſt in the world. All this, perhaps, is not true, but

ſuch are my feelings. That I ſhould not know where to go, or whither to turn me, depends only, Sir, upon you.

The Superiors at Longchamp, as well as in moſt religious houſes, change every three years. It was a Madame Moni who entered upon the charge when I was conducted to the houſe; it is impoſſible for me to ſpeak too highly of her; yet her goodneſs proved my ruin. She was a woman of ſenſe, and acquainted with the human heart. She could make allowances, though nobody had leſs occaſion for it, for we all were her children. She never ſaw faults but thoſe of which ſhe could not help taking notice, or the importance of which could not be overlooked. I ſpeak of her without intereſt. I diſcharged my duty with exactneſs, and ſhe did me the juſtice to ſay, that I committed no fault which ſhe had to puniſh, or which ſhe had to pardon. If ſhe had any predilections, they were inſpired by merit. After this I don't know if I ought to tell you that ſhe loved me tenderly, and that I was not the leaſt of her favourites. I know that is a high panegyric I beſtow upon myſelf, greater than you can imagine, ſince you never knew her. The name of favourite is that which the reſt invidiouſly beſtow upon thoſe who are beſt beloved by the Superior. If there was any defect with which I could reproach Madame Moni, it was that her taſte for virtue, piety, candour, gentleneſs, talents, honour, induced her to give a marked preference to thoſe who poſſeſſed them; and that ſhe knew well that thoſe who could not pretend to theſe qualities, were but the more humbled by her conduct. She likewiſe poſſeſſed the faculty, perhaps more frequent in convents than in the world, of a prompt diſcernment of minds. It rarely happened that a nun who did not pleaſe her at firſt,

ever

ever proved agreeable to her afterwards. She quickly took me into her favour, and from the very beginning I repoſed the moſt perfect confidence in her: ill-fated thoſe from whom ſhe could not extract it without effort! they muſt have been bad without reſource, and conſcious of their misfortune. She talked to me of my adventure at St. Mary's. I related it to her with as little diſguiſe as to you; I told her every thing I have now written; both what regarded my birth, and what concerned my ſufferings; nothing was forgotten. She lamented my fate, ſhe comforted me, and painted more agreeable proſpects to my hopes. Meanwhile, the period of my poſtulation elapſed, that of my aſſuming the habit arrived, and I took it. I performed my noviciate without averſion. I paſſed rapidly over thoſe two years, becauſe they contained nothing melancholy to me, but the ſecret feeling that I was ſlowly approaching a ſtate for which I was not formed. Sometimes it was renewed with violence, and as often as this happened I recurred to my good Superior, who embraced me, who unboſomed my ſoul, who diſplayed to me her arguments with force, and always concluded with telling me: And have not other ſituations too their croſſes? We are apt to be ſenſible only of our own. Come, my child, let us fall on our knees and pray. .... She then knelt down and prayed aloud, but with ſo much unction, eloquence, mildneſs, elevation, and force, that you would have ſaid that ſhe was inſpired by the Spirit of God. Her thoughts, her expreſſions, her images, penetrated to the very bottom of the heart; at firſt you liſtened, by degrees you were elevated, you were united with her; the ſoul was thrilled, and you partook her tranſports. Her deſign was not to ſeduce, but certainly this ſhe accompliſhed. We left her with

a heart enraptured, our countenances diſplayed joy and extaſy, we ſhed tears ſo delightful! It was an impreſſion which ſhe herſelf took, which ſhe long retained, and which thoſe to whom it was communicated likewiſe preſerved. It is not to my own experience that I refer, it is to that of all the nuns. Some of them have told me that they have felt the want of her conſolation as that of an exquiſite pleaſure; and I believed I required only a little more habit to reach that point. Nevertheleſs, at the approach of my profeſſion, I experienced a melancholy ſo profound, that it expoſed my good Superior to ſevere trials. Her talents forſook her; ſhe herſelf acknowledged it to me. I don't know, ſaid ſhe, what paſſes within me; it ſeems when you come as if God retired, and his ſpirit were ſilent. It is in vain that I animate myſelf, that I ſeek ideas, and I attempt to exalt my ſoul; I feel myſelf an ordinary and humble woman. I am afraid to ſpeak... Ah! my dear mother, ſaid I, what preſentiment! if it were God that rendered you dumb!... One day, that I felt myſelf more uncertain and more depreſſed than ever, I went to her cell; my preſence at firſt rendered her ſpeechleſs; it ſeemed that ſhe read in my eyes, in my whole perſon, that the profound ſentiment I carried within me, was beyond her ſtrength, and ſhe was unwilling to ſtruggle without the certainty of being victorious. Nevertheleſs, ſhe made the attempt; by degrees ſhe warmed; in proportion as my ſorrow ſubſided, her enthuſiaſm encreaſed. She threw herſelf ſuddenly upon her knees, I followed her example, I imagined that I was to partake her tranſports; I wiſhed it. She pronounced ſome words, then all at once ſhe was ſilent; I waited in vain, ſhe ſpoke no more; ſhe roſe, ſhe burſt into tears, ſhe took me by the hand, and

ſqueezing

ſqueezing it between hers:—Oh! my dear child. ſaid ſhe, what a cruel effect have you produced upon me! Obſerve the conſequence; the ſpirit has withdrawn, I feel it; go, let God ſpeak to you himſelf, ſince it is not his pleaſure to communicate himſelf by me... In reality, I know not what had paſſed within her; whether I had inſpired her with a diſtruſt of her powers, which has never been diſſipated, whether I had rendered her timid, or really broken her correſpondence with heaven, but the talent of conſolation returned to her no more. Upon the eve of my profeſſion I went to ſee her; ſhe laboured under a melancholy equal to my own. I wept, and ſo did ſhe; I threw myſelf at her feet, ſhe bleſſed me, ſhe raiſed me up, embraced me, and again ſent me away, ſaying:—I am weary of life, I wiſh to die; I have aſked of God never to ſee this day, but it is not his will. Go, I will ſpeak to your mother, I will paſs the night in prayer; pray alſo, but go to bed, I command you.... Allow me, anſwered I, to join you.... I allow you from nine o'clock till eleven, no more, no more. At half paſt nine o'clock I will begin to pray, and you will begin alſo; but at eleven o'clock, you will allow me to pray alone, and you will take repoſe. Go, dear child, I ſhall watch before God the remainder of the night.

She wiſhed to pray, but could not. I ſlept, and in the mean time this holy woman went through the paſſages knocking at every door; ſhe awoke the nuns, and made them go down without noiſe to the church. All of them repaired thither; and when they were there, ſhe invited them to addreſs themſelves to heaven in my favour. This prayer was made in ſilence; then ſhe extinguiſhed the light, all repeated together the *Miſerere*, except the Superior, who, proſtrate at the foot of the altar,

tar, macerated herſelf in a cruel manner, ſaying: O God! If it is for any fault which I have committed that you have departed from me, grant me forgiveneſs. I do not aſk you to reſtore me the gift of which you have deprived me, but that you would addreſs yourſelf to this innocent, who ſleeps while I here invoke you in her favour. My God, ſpeak to her, ſpeak to her parents, and forgive me.

The next day, early in the morning, ſhe entered my cell; I did not hear her, I was not yet awake. She ſat down by my bedſide. She had lain one of her hands gently upon my forehead. She gazed upon me; diſquietude, agitation, and ſorrow, ſucceeded upon her countenance; and ſuch was the appearance ſhe exhibited to me when I opened my eyes. She did not mention to me what had paſſed during the night; ſhe only aſked, If I had gone to bed early? I anſwered: At the hour you commanded me.—If I had reſted? Profoundly.—I expected ſo.... How I was? Very well,—And you, my dear mother?—Alas ſaid ſhe, I never ſaw any perſon take the vows without diſquietude; but I never experienced ſo much anxiety about any one, as about you; I wiſh ſincerely that you may be happy.—If you continue to love me, I ſhall be happy.—Ah, did it but depend upon that!—Have you thought of nothing during the night?—No.—You have had no dream?—None.—What paſſes at preſent in your mind?—I am ſtupid; I yield to my fate with repugnance, and without inclination; I feel that neceſſity hurries me on, and I allow myſelf to go. Ah! my dear mother, I feel none of that mild joy, that thrilling ſenſation, that melancholy, that gentle perturbation, which I have ſometimes remarked in thoſe who ſtood in my preſent ſituation. I am weak; I cannot even weep.

That

That it is the desire of my parents, it must be done, is the only idea which occupies me.... But you say nothing to me.—I am not come to discourse to you, but to see and to hear you. I expect your mother; endeavour not to agitate me; allow my feelings to work up in my mind; when it is full I will go away. I must be silent: I know myself; I have but one impulse, and I must not waste its strength with you. Repose while my visit lasts; say only a few words, and allow me to find here what I am come to seek. I will go, and God will perform the rest....—I was silent, I leaned upon my pillow, I held out to her one of my hands, which she took; she seemed to meditate, and to meditate deeply; she studiously kept her eyes shut; sometimes she opened them, raised them to heaven, and again settled them upon me; she was agitated, her soul was filled with tumult; she became composed, and again her agitation returned. In truth, this woman was born to be a propheteſs; she had the couutenance and the character of one. She had been beautiful; but age, while it rendered her features heavy, and planted large wrinkles upon her face, had still added dignity to her physiognomy. She had small eyes, but they seemed either to look inwards upon herself, or to soar above the objects by which she was surrounded, and to expatiate beyond them; always into the past, or into the future. She sometimes squeezed my hand; she abruptly asked what o'clock it was?—It is near six.—Adieu, they are coming to dress you; I do not wish to be present, it would distract me... I have only care; it is to preserve moderation in the first moments.

She had scarcely gone out, when the mother of the novices and my companions came: the former stripped me of the religious habit, and dressed me in

in the cloaths common in the world; it is the cuſtom, you know. I heard nothing of what was ſaid around me: I was reduced almoſt to the ſtate of an automaton; I took no notice of any thing; only I had at intervals, as it were, ſlight convulſive motions. They told me what it was neceſſary to do; they were often obliged to repeat it to me, for I never heard the firſt time; and this proceeded not from my thinking upon ſome other ſubject, but becauſe I was abſorbed; my head was fatigued as if it had been by exceſſive reflection. In the mean time my Superior was converſing with my mother; I never knew what paſſed at this interview, which laſted for a long time: I was told only, that when they ſeparated, my mother was ſo embarraſſed, that ſhe could not find the door by which ſhe came in; and that the Superior went out with her hands locked and fixed againſt her brow.

The clock ſtruck; I went down. The aſſembly was not numerous. A ſermon was preached to me: whether it deſigned me good or bad I know not, for I did not hear a word: they diſpoſed of me all this morning, which is a vacuum in my life, as they pleaſed, for I was inſenſible of its lapſe; I know neither what was done nor what was ſaid. They no doubt interrogated me, I no doubt anſwered; I pronounced ſome vows, but I have no recollection of them, and I became a nun as innocently as I was made a chriſtian: I no more comprehend the ceremony of my profeſſion, than that of my baptiſm, with this difference, that the one confers grace, and the other ſuppoſes it. Well, Sir, though I did not remonſtrate at Longchamp; as I did at Saint Mary's, do you think me the more bound on that account? I appeal to your judgement, I appeal to the judgement

ment of God. I was in a ſtate of ſuch profound melancholy, that ſome days after, when they announced to me that I belonged to the choir, I did not know what they meant. I aſked if it was really true that I had made profeſſion? I wiſhed to ſee the ſignature of my vows. Not contented with theſe proofs, I made them bring the atteſtations of the whole community, and that of ſome ſtrangers whom they had invited to the ceremony. Addreſſing myſelf ſeveral times to the Superior, I ſaid to her: Is this then really the caſe?.... I expected always that ſhe was going to anſwer: No, my child, they deceive you. Her repeated aſſurances could not convince me; I could not believe that in the ſpace of a whole day, ſo buſtling, ſo varied, ſo crowded with ſingular and ſtriking circumſtances, I could not remember one, not even the countenance, of thoſe who attended me, nor that of either the miniſter who preached, or of him who received my vows. The changing of my religious dreſs for that of the world, is the only thing which I recollect; from that moment I was what they call phyſically inſenſible. It was ſome months before I recovered from this ſtate; and it is to this protracted kind of convaleſcence, that I aſcribe my profound forgetfulneſs of what is paſt; like thoſe who, in the courſe of a tedious illneſs, have talked ſenſibly, and received the ſacrament; and who, after they are reſtored to health, have no memory of the circumſtances. I have ſeen many inſtances of it in our houſe, and I have ſaid to myſelf, this is probably what happened to me on the day that I made profeſſion. But it remains to be enquired, whether theſe actions are performed by the perſon, and whether the perſon be really there, though ſhe appeared to be ſo.

In

In the courſe of the ſame year I ſuffered three afflicting loſſes: that of my father, or rather of him who paſſed as ſuch; he was old, he had laboured hard, he was worn out; that of my Superior; and that of my mother.

This worthy nun long felt her hour approaching; ſhe condemned herſelf to ſilence; ſhe ordered her coffin to be brought into her chamber. She had loſt the power of ſleeping; ſhe had paſſed her days and nights in writing and in meditation; ſhe has left fifteen meditations, which I think are moſt beautiful; I have a copy of them. If you are curious any day to ſee the ideas which this event ſuggeſts, I ſhall ſend you them: they are entitled, *The laſt Moments of Siſter Moni.*

At the approach of death, ſhe made herſelf be dreſſed; ſhe was laid upon a bed; they adminiſtered to her the laſt ſacrament; ſhe held a Chriſt in her arms. It was night; the light of the tapers illuminated the mournful ſcene; we were around her, we ſhed tears; her cell reſounded with cries, all on a ſudden her eyes ſparkled; ſhe raiſed herſelf up haſtily, and ſpoke; her voice was almoſt as ſtrong as when ſhe was in health; ſhe reproached us with our tears, which ſeemed to envy her eternal felicity. My children, your grief is miſtimed. It is there, it is there, ſaid ſhe, pointing to the heavens, that I ſhall be of ſervice to you; my eyes ſhall reſt perpetually upon this houſe; I will intercede for you, and I ſhall be heard. Come near, all of you, that I may embrace you, come, and receive my bleſſing and laſt adieus.... When ſhe was uttering theſe laſt words, this ſingular woman, who has left behind her never-ending regrets, departed.

My mother died, on her return from a viſit which ſhe made to one of her daughters, at the

end

end of autumn. She was ſplenetic; her health was very much impaired. I never knew either my father's name, or the hiſtory of my birth. The perſon who was both her and my director, ſent me from her a ſmall packet containing fifty louis, with a note wrapped up in a ſmall piece of linen. The note was as follows: "My child, it is a trifle, but "my conſcience does not permit me to diſpoſe "of a greater ſum; it is the fruits of my ſavings "upon the ſmall preſents made me by M. Simonin. "Lead a holy life; it will conclude moſt to your "happineſs, even in this world. Pray for me: "the crime to which you owe your birth, is the "only one of importance which I have commited; "aid me in expiating it; and may God forgive me "for bringing you into the world, in conſidera-"tion of the good works you may perform. "Above all, be not troubleſome to the family; "and though the choice of the condition which "you have embraced, is not ſo voluntary as I "could have wiſhed, dread the idea of changing "it. Would that I had been ſhut up in a convent "for my whole life! I ſhould not be ſo diſtreſſed "with the thought of hearing in a ſhort time my "irrevocable doom. Conſider, my child, that the "fate of your mother in another world, depends "much upon the conduct which you hold in this; "the omniſcient God will apply to me in his "juſtice all the good and all the evil which you "ſhall perform. Adieu, Suſan; aſk nothing of "your ſiſters, they are not in a ſituation to aſſiſt "you; expect nothing from your father, he has "gone before me; he has ſeen the great day; he "waits my coming; my preſence will be leſs "terrible to him than his will be to me. Adieu, "once more. Ah! wretched mother! Ah! "wretched child! your ſiſters are arrived; I am

"not

" not pleaſed with them; they ſeize, they carry
" off my property, they quarrel under the eyes of
" a dying mother, from motives of intereſt;
" a circumſtance which is to me the moſt diſtreſſ-
" ing. When they approach my bed, I turn to
" the other ſide; what do I ſee in them? two
" creatures, in whom indigence has ſtifled every
" natural feeling. They ſigh after the little that
" I am about to leave; they put indecent queſtions
" to the phyſician and nurſe, which mark the
" impatience with which they expect the moment
" when I ſhall go hence, and which will put them
" in poſſeſſion of every thing about me. They
" are ſuſpicious, I know not why, leſt I ſhould
" have ſome money concealed about the mattraſs:
" there is no pretence which they have not
" employed to make me riſe, and they have ſuc-
" ceeded; but luckily the perſon with whom
" I was to make the depoſit, came laſt night, and
" I have ſent you the ſmall packet with this letter,
" which he has written to my dictation. Burn
" the letter; and when you know that I am no
" more, which will ſpeedily happen, you will ſay
" maſs for me, and you will renew your vows,
" for I ſtill deſire that you remain in the convent:
" the idea of your being caſt friendleſs, deſtitute,
" and young upon the world, would render my
" laſt moments completely miſerable."

My father died on the 5th of January, my Superior at the end of the ſame month, and my mother on the ſecond Chriſtmas holiday.

Siſter Saint-Chriſtian ſucceeded Mother Moni. But, ah! Sir, what a difference between the one and the other! I have told you what a woman the former was. The latter had an inſignificant character; her mind was narrow and ſuperſtitious; ſhe gave into new opinions; ſhe conferred with Sulpicians and Jeſuits. She took an averſion to all

all her predeceſſor's favourites :—the houſe inſtantly became a ſcene of diſturbance, animoſities, ſlanders, accuſations, calumnies, and perſecutions : we had to diſcuſs theological queſtions which we did not underſtand, to ſubſcribe formulas, and to conform to ſingular practices. Mother Moni did not approve of thoſe penitential exerciſes which concerned the body ; ſhe macerated herſelf only twice in the courſe of her life, once on the eve of my profeſſion, and another time on a ſimilar occaſion. She uſed to ſay of theſe penances, that they corrected no fault, that they only ſerved as a ground of pride. Her deſire was that her nuns ſhould behave well, and that they ſhould keep their bodies ſound, and their minds tranquil. The firſt thing ſhe did when ſhe entered upon her charge, was to make them bring her all the hair cloths, and the ſcourges ; and to forbid them to ſpoil their food with aſhes, to lie on hard beds, or to provide themſelves with any of theſe inſtruments. The ſecond, on the contrary, ſent back to every nun her hair-cloth and her ſcourge, and took from them the Old and New Teſtament. The favourites of the former were not the favourites of the ſucceeding reign . . . The exiſting Superior was indifferent to me, to ſay no worſe, becauſe I had been beloved by her predeceſſor ; but I was not long of embittering my lot, by ſome actions which you will call either imprudent or ſpirited, according to the light in which you view them. In the firſt place, I wholly abandoned myſelf to the grief which I felt from the loſs of our former Superior, praiſed her upon all occaſions, and ſuggeſted compariſons between her and the preſent governeſs, which were not favourable to the latter ; deſcribed the ſtate of the houſe for years paſt, recalled to their recollection the peace we enjoyed, the indulgence we experienced,

perienced, and the nouriſhment, both ſpiritual and temporal, which was then adminiſtered to us; every thing, in fine, which tended to exalt the morals, the feelings, and the character of Siſter Moni. Secondly, I caſt my hair-cloth into the fire, threw away my ſcourge, preached to my friends upon the ſubject, and engaged ſome of them to follow my example. The third thing I did, was to provide myſelf with an Old and New Teſtament; the fourth, to renounce all parties, and to abide by the name of Chriſtian, without accepting the title of Janſeniſt, or Moliniſt. The fifth was, ſtrictly to regulate my conduct by the rules of the houſe, without either wiſhing to do more or leſs than they required, and conſequently not to perform any work of ſupererogation, thoſe of obligation appearing to me to be more than ſufficient; not to mount to the organ except on holidays; not to ſing except when I was of the choir; and no longer to ſuffer them to abuſe my complaiſance and my talents, by ſetting me to do every thing at all times. I read their conſtitution over and over again, I learnt it by heart: if they ordered me to do any thing which was either not clearly expreſſed, or which was omitted, or which appeared to me to be contrary to what was there enjoined, I would firmly refuſe to comply, I would take the book and ſay: Theſe are the engagements that I have taken, and I have taken no others.... My diſcourſes made ſome converts. The authority of the miſtreſs was limited, they could no longer diſpoſe of us like ſlaves. Not a day paſſed without ſome ſcene of notoriety. In caſes of uncertainty, my companions came to conſult me, and I always took part againſt deſpotiſm. I had ſoon the air of a factious perſon, and perhaps I acted the part of one. The Grand Vicars of the Archbiſhop were continually

continually called in. I appeared, I defended myſelf, I defended my companions; and it never once happened that they were condemned, ſuch care did I take to have reaſon on my ſide. It was impoſſible to attack me on the ſcore of diſcharging my duty: that I ſcrupulouſly performed. As for thoſe little favours which a Superior is always at liberty to grant or to withhold, I never aſked them. I did not appear in the parlour; and with regard to viſits, not knowing any perſon, I never received any. But I had burnt my hair-cloth, and my ſcourge; I had adviſed others to do the ſame; I never wiſhed to hear either good or ill ſpoken of Janſeniſm or Moliniſm. When they aſked me if I acknowledged ſubmiſſion to the conſtitution, I replied, that I did to the church: and, if I received the Bull? that I received the goſpel. They viſited my cell, they found the Old and New Teſtament in it. I had let eſcape ſome imprudent expreſſions about a ſuſpicious intimacy of ſome of the favourites; the Superior had long and frequent interviews with a young eccleſiaſtic, the reaſon of which I had diſtinguiſhed from the pretext: I omitted nothing which could make myſelf feared, hated, and undone; and I accompliſhed it at laſt. They no longer complained of me to the Superiors, but they did every thing in their power to render my life uncomfortable. They forbad the nuns to come near me, and I ſoon found myſelf deſerted. I had a few friends who contrived, by ſtealth, to get the better of the reſtraint which was impoſed upon them; and now that they could not paſs the day with me, they viſited me at night, or at forbidden hours; they ſet ſpies upon us; they ſurpriſed me ſometimes with one, ſometimes with another; this ſort of imprudence was all they wiſhed for, and I was puniſhed for it in a moſt inhuman

inhuman manner: they condemned me for whole weeks to paſs the ſervice on my knees, apart from the reſt of the choir; to live upon bread and water; to remain ſhut up in my cell; to perform the meaneſt offices in the houſe. Thoſe whom they called my accomplices were no better treated. When they could not find me in a fault, they took one for granted: they ſometimes gave me orders which it was impoſſible to execute, and puniſhed me for not obeying them; they changed the hours of ſervice and of eating; they deranged, without my knowledge, the whole cloiſtral order; and with all the attention I could beſtow, I was every day culpable, and every day puniſhed. I had courage, but there is no degree of fortitude that can ſupport deſertion, ſolitude, and perſecution. Things came to ſuch a height, that they made ſport of tormenting me; it was the amuſement of a band of fifty perſons. It is impoſſible to enter into a minute detail of their malicious tricks; they prevented me from ſleeping, from watching, and from praying. One day they ſtole ſome of my clothes, another day they carried off my keys, or my breviary; my lock was ſpoiled; they hindered me from doing my duty, and what I did they never failed to derange; they aſcribed to me actions and ſpeeches of which I was not the author; they made me reſponſible for every thing, and my life was one continual ſcene of real or pretended faults and of chaſtiſements.—My health was not proof againſt ſo long and ſevere trials; I fell into a ſtate of dejection, ſpleen, and melancholy. At firſt I had recourſe to the altar for energy of mind, and I found ſome at times. I wavered between reſignation and deſpair, ſometimes ſubmitting to all the rigour of my fate, at other times meditating my deliverance by violent means. There was a deep

deep well at the foot of the garden; how often have I looked at it! There was by the ſide of the well a ſtone ſeat; how often have I ſat upon it, with my head leaning upon the brink! how often, in the tumult of my ideas, have I ſuddenly got up and reſolved to put an end to my ſufferings! What prevented me? Why did I then prefer lamentation, crying aloud, trampling my veil under my feet, tearing my hair, and macerating my face with my nails?—If God prevented me from deſtroying myſelf, why did he not alſo put a ſtop to theſe acts of violence?—I am going to tell you a thing, which will, perhaps, appear ſtrange, but which is not the leſs true; it is, that I have no doubt but my frequent viſits to the well were obſerved, and that my cruel enemies flattered themſelves that I would one day execute the purpoſe which was conceived in the bottom of my breaſt. When I went that way, they affected to part from me, and to look in a different direction. I have ſeveral times found the garden door open when it ought to have been ſhut, particularly on thoſe days when they had multiplied the cauſes of my chagrin, and when they had rouſed the violence of my temper to ſuch a pitch, that they thought my intellects were deranged. But as ſoon as I diſcovered that they preſented this form of death to my deſpair, that they led me, as it were, by the hand to this well, and that I found it always ready to receive me, it ceaſed to employ my thoughts; my mind turned to other objects; I went through the galleries, and meaſured the height of the windows; at night, when I was undreſſing myſelf, I tried, without thinking of it, the ſtrength of my garters: another day I would not eat; I went down to the hall, and remained there leaning againſt the wall, my hands hanging down by my ſides, and my eyes

eyes ſhut; I would not touch the meat they ſet before me; and in this ſtate I ſo completely forgot myſelf, that I would ſtay after all the nuns had gone out. They affected to withdraw without making a noiſe; and leaving me there, they afterwards puniſhed me for neglecting the exerciſes. What ſhall I tell you? They diſguſted me with almoſt all the means of ridding myſelf of my exiſtence, becauſe, far from oppoſing my intentions, they put the inſtruments of executing them in my way. We do not like the appearance of people puſhing us out of the world; and perhaps, had they ſeemed eager to keep me in it, I ſhould have been no more. When we take away our life, it is perhaps for the purpoſe of occaſioning diſtreſs to others; and we preſerve it, when we think that they would be pleaſed at our taking it away: theſe are the ſecret workings of our minds. In truth, if it is poſſible for me to recollect what paſſed within me by the ſide of the well, I think I called upon thoſe wretches who kept at a diſtance for the ſake of favouring the commiſſion of a crime: Take one ſtep towards me, ſhew the ſmalleſt deſire of ſaving me, run to prevent me, and be aſſured you ſhall be too late.....In fact, I lived only becauſe they wiſhed my death. The ſavage paſſion for tormenting and deſtroying decays in the world; it is indefatigable in the cloiſter.

I was in this ſituation when, reviewing my paſt life, I conceived the deſign of renouncing my vows. At firſt I thought of it ſlightly. Alone, deſerted, without ſupport, how could I ſucceed in a project ſo difficult, though ſeconded by all the aſſiſtance of which I was in want? Yet this idea tranquillized me, my ſpirit ſettled, I was more myſelf; I avoided ſome evils, and I ſupported more patiently thoſe by which I was aſſailed. This change

change was remarked, and it excited aſtoniſhment; malice ſtopped ſhort, like a cowardly foe who purſues, and againſt whom you make a ſtand when he does not expect it. There is one queſtion, Sir, which I would wiſh to propoſe to you; it is, why, in ſpite of all the gloomy ideas which paſs through the mind of a nun reduced to deſpair, that of ſetting fire to the houſe never occurs to her imagination? I never entertained the deſign, nor did ſome others, although the thing be very eaſy to execute. Nothing more is neceſſary than, upon a windy day, to apply a flambeau to a garret, a pile of wood, a paſſage. No convents are ſet fire to; yet upon ſuch occaſions the doors are thrown open, and they ſave themſelves who can. May not the reaſon be, that they fear the danger that might overtake themſelves and thoſe they love, and that they diſdain a relief which is common to them with thoſe they hate? This laſt idea is, perhaps, too ſubtle to be true.

From occupying ourſelves greatly with any object, we feel its juſtice, and even believe its poſſibility; we are very ſtrong when we have reached that point. It was to me the buſineſs of a fortnight; my mind is rapid in its movement. What was the object? To draw up a memorial and to preſent it for a conſultation; both were attended with danger.—Since this reſolution had taken place in my mind, I was obſerved with greater attention than ever; they followed me with their eyes; I never took a ſtep that was not traced; I never uttered a word that was not weighed. They inſinuated themſelves about me, they endeavoured to ſound me, they queſtioned me, they affected compaſſion and friendſhip, they reviewed my paſt life, they faintly blamed me, they deviſed excuſes, they hoped a more correct

conduct, they flattered me that the future would be more ſerene; at the ſame time they entered my cell every moment, by day, by night, upon ſome pretext or other; abruptly and cautiouſly they drew aſide my curtains and retired. I had contracted the habit of going to bed in my clothes. I had another practice, that of reducing my confeſſion to writing. Upon the appointed days I aſked for ink and paper from the Superior, who never refuſed me. I waited therefore for the day of confeſſion, and in the mean time I arranged in my head what I had to propoſe. It was an abridgement of all I have written to you, only I explained myſelf under feigned names. But I committed three abſurdities: the firſt was, telling the Superior that I ſhould have a great many things to write, and upon this pretext, aſking of her more paper than is allowed; the ſecond, occupying myſelf with my memorial, and neglecting my confeſſion; and the third, having made out no confeſſion, and being unprepared for this act of religion, remaining at the confeſſional but a ſingle moment. All this was remarked, and they concluded that the paper I had aſked for was employed in a different manner from that I had mentioned. But if it had not ſerved for my confeſſion, as was evident, how had it been uſed? Without knowing that they were impreſſed with theſe diſquietudes, I felt that it would not do for them to find upon me a writing of this importance. At firſt I thought of ſewing it in my bolſter, and in my mattreſs; then of concealing it in my clothes, of burying it in the garden, of throwing it in the fire. You cannot believe how ſtrongly I was urged to write, and how much I was embarraſſed with it when it was written. Firſt, I ſealed the paper, thruſt it into my boſom, and went

went to ſervice, to which the bell ſummoned. I was oppreſſed with an alarm which my emotions betrayed. I was ſeated by the ſide of a young nun who loved me; ſometimes I had ſeen her gaze upon me with pity, and ſhed tears. She did not ſpeak to me, but certainly ſhe was unhappy. At the riſk of every conſequence, I reſolved to entruſt her with my paper. At the moment of the prayer, when all the nuns fall upon their knees, bend forward, and are, as it were, ſunk in their pews, I gently drew the paper from my boſom, and held it out to her behind me; ſhe took it and thruſt it into her boſom. This was the moſt important ſervice ſhe had done me; but I had received many others; ſhe had laboured whole months, without being diſcovered, in removing the little obſtacles with which they had encumbered my duties, and, upon my failure, to have an opportunity to chaſtiſe me. She came and knocked at my door when it was time to go out; ſhe put to rights every thing they had deranged; ſhe had gone and rung the bell, or made reſponſes upon the proper occaſions; ſhe was in every place where I ought to have been. Of all this I was ignorant.

I did well in employing this expedient. When we left the choir, the Superior ſaid to me:—Siſter Suſan, follow me....I followed her; then ſtopping in the paſſage at another door, This is your cell, ſaid ſhe, Siſter St. Jerome will occupy yours.... I entered, and ſhe along with me; we had both ſat down without ſpeaking, when a nun appeared with ſome clothes which ſhe laid upon a chair, and the Superior ſaid:—Siſter Suſan, undreſs, and take theſe clothes....I obeyed in her preſence; in the mean time ſhe was attentive to all my motions. The ſiſter who had brought the clothes was at the door; ſhe re-entered, carried away

thoſe I had quitted; and went out, followed by the Superior. I was not informed of the reaſon of theſe proceedings, nor did I enquire. During this interval, they had ſearched every part of my cell, they had unſewed my pillow and my mattreſs, they had diſplaced and rummaged every thing. They traced my foot-ſteps; they went to the confeſſional, to the church, to the garden, to the well, to the low ſeat; I ſaw part of theſe ſearches, and I ſuſpected the reſt. They found nothing, but they remained as fully convinced as ever, that there was ſome foundation for their anxiety. They continued to watch me with ſpies for many days. They went wherever I had gone; they looked every where, but in vain. At laſt the Superior believed that it was impoſſible to know the truth, but from myſelf. She one day entered my cell, and ſaid to me, Siſter Suſan, you have faults, but that of lying is not among the number; then tell me the truth: What have you done with all the paper I gave you?—Madam, I have told you.—That is impoſſible, for you aſked me for a great deal, and you were only a moment at the confeſſional.—It is true.—What then have you done with it?—What I told you.—Well then, ſwear to me, by the holy obedience you have vowed to God, that ſuch is the truth, and, in ſpite of appearances, I will believe you.—Madam, you are not permitted to exact an oath for a ſlight matter, and I am not at liberty to take it. I cannot ſwear.—You deceive me, Siſter Suſan, and you are not aware to what you expoſe yourſelf. What have you done with the paper I gave you?—I have told you.—Where is it?—I have it not.—What uſe have you made of it?—Such as is made of thoſe writings which are uſeleſs after they have ſerved their purpoſe.—Swear to me, by the ſacred obedience you owe, that it has

has all been employed in writing your confeſſion, and is no longer in your poſſeſſion.—Madam, repeat, this ſecond point being no more important than the firſt, I cannot ſwear.—Swear, ſaid ſhe to me, or.....—I will not ſwear.—You will not ſwear?—No, Madam.—You are then guilty?—And of what am I guilty?—Of every thing; there nothing of which you are not capable. You have affected to praiſe my predeceſſor, in order to depreciate me; to contemn the cuſtoms ſhe had preſcribed, which ſhe had aboliſhed, and which conceived it my duty to re-eſtabliſh; you have endeavoured to deſtroy the principles of ſubordination in the community; you have infringed its laws, you have ſown diviſion among its members; you have failed in the performance of every duty which your ſituation required; and what to me is of all the moſt painful conſideration, you have compelled me to puniſh you and thoſe whom you had ſeduced. While it was in my power to enforce againſt you every ſeverity which the moſt rigorous meaſures could inflict, I yet treated you with indulgence; I imagined that you would acknowledge your faults, that you would reſume the ſpirit which befits your ſituation, and that you would ſolicit with anxiety your reconciliation with me; but I have been miſtaken. Something is in agitation in your mind, which is not good; you are occupied with ſome projects; the intereſt of the houſe demands that I ſhould know, and I will know them, depend upon it. Siſter Suſan, tell me the truth.—I have told it you.—I am about to leave you; dread my return; I will again ſit down; I allow you yet a moment to determine.... Your papers, if they exiſt...—I have them not.—Or the oath that they only contained your confeſſion.—I cannot do it.....—She remained a moment in

ſilence, then ſhe retired, and returned with four of her favourites. The appearance of them all was diſtracted and furious. I threw myſelf at their feet, I implored their mercy. They all exclaimed in concert, No mercy. Madam, do not allow yourſelf to be moved by her ſupplications; ſhe muſt give up her papers, or go quietly. I embraced the knees firſt of one, then of another; I addreſſed them by their names, ſaying: Siſter Saint Agnes, Siſter Saint Julia, what have I done to you? Why do you incenſe my Superior againſt me? Was it thus that I ever acted? How often have I interceded for you! You then remember my kindneſs no more. You were in fault, but I am not. The Superior, unmoved, looked at me and ſaid, give up your papers, wretch, or diſcloſe what they contained.—Madam, ſaid they to her, do not aſk her for them any more; you are too indulgent; you are not ſufficiently acquainted with her character: ſhe is an untractable ſpirit with whom it is impoſſible to ſucceed but by proceeding to extremities; ſhe compels you to embrace that alternative, and ſhe muſt ſuffer for it. Give us orders to ſtrip her, and let her be conſigned to the place deſtined for thoſe who purſue a ſimilar conduct.—My dear mother, I ſwear I have done nothing which can offend either God or man.—That is not the oath which I exact.—She may have written againſt us, againſt you, ſome memorial to the Grand Vicar, or to the Archbiſhop; God knows the deſcription ſhe may have given of the internal ſtate of the houſe; accuſation eaſily obtains credit. Madam, you muſt diſpoſe of this creature, unleſs you would have our fall to be determined by her.—The Superior added: Siſter Suſan, conſider..... I roſe abruptly, and ſaid to her: Madam, I have conſidered every conſequence,

I feel

I feel that I am undone, but a moment ſooner or later is not worth the trouble of a thought. Do with me whatever you pleaſe, yield to their fury, conſummate your injuſtice.—Immediately I held out my hands to them; they were ſeized by her companions, who tore away my veil, and ſtripped me without ſhame. They found in my boſom a miniature picture of my old Superior; they ſeized it: I entreated permiſſion to kiſs it once more, but the favour was refuſed. They threw me a ſhift, they took off my ſtockings, they covered me with a ſack, and they led me, with my head and feet uncovered, along the paſſages. I cried, I called for help; but they had ſounded the bell, to give warning that nobody ſhould appear. I invoked Heaven: I ſunk to the earth, and they dragged me along. When I had reached the bottom of the ſtairs, my feet were bloody, my limbs were bruiſed; my ſituation would have ſoftened hearts of flint. With large keys, however, they opened the door of a little gloomy ſubterraneous cell, where they threw me upon a mat half rotted by the damp. I found there a ſlice of black bread, and a pitcher of water, with ſome coarſe neceſſary utenſils. The mat, when rolled up, formed a pillow. Upon a ſtone lay a death's head, and a wooden crucifix. My firſt impulſe was to put a period to my exiſtence. I applied my hands to my throat, I tore my clothes with my teeth; I uttered hideous cries; I howled like a wild beaſt, I daſhed my head againſt the walls; I covered myſelf over with blood; I endeavoured to take away my life till my ſtrength failed, which very ſoon happened. In this place I paſſed three days; I imagined myſelf condemned to it for life. Every morning one of my executioners viſited me, and ſaid: Obey our Superior, and you ſhall be

liberated from this place.—I have done nothing, I know not what I am required to perform: Ah! Sister Saint Clement, there is a God in heaven.

The third day, about nine o'clock at night, the door was opened by the same nuns who had conducted me to the dungeon. After a panegyric upon the goodness of the Superior, they announced to me her forgiveness, and that they were going to set me at liberty.—It is too late, said I, leave me; here I wish to die.—Nevertheless they raised me up, and dragged me away; they led me back to a cell where I found the Superior. I have consulted God, said she, upon your situation; he has touched my heart; it is his will that I should take pity upon you, and I obey. Fall upon your knees, and ask his pardon....I fell upon my knees, and said, My God, I entreat your forgiveness for the faults I have committed, as upon the cross you asked forgiveness for me.—What presumption! exclaimed they; she compares herself to Jesus Christ, and us she compares to the Jews by whom he was crucified.—Do not consider my conduct, said I, but consider yourselves, and judge.—This is not all, said the Superior to me; swear by the sacred obedience you have vowed, that you will not speak of what has happened.—What you have done, then, is certainly very criminal, since you exact from me an oath that I shall never reveal it. None but your own conscience shall every know it, I swear.—You swear?—Yes, I swear....This being concluded, they stripped me of the clothes they had given me, and left me again to dress myself in my own.

I had been affected by the damps, I was in a critical situation; my whole body was bruised: for some days I had only taken a few drops of water, and a little bread. I imagined that this

persecution

perſecution was to be the laſt I ſhould have to ſuffer. From the momentary effect of theſe violent ſhocks, which demonſtrate the extraordinary power of nature in young perſons, I recovered in a very ſhort time; and when I again made my appearance, I found all the community perſuaded that I had been ſick. I reſumed the exerciſes of the houſe, and my place at church. I had not forgotten my paper, nor the young ſiſter to whom it had been confided: I was ſure that ſhe had not abuſed the depoſit, and that ſhe had not kept it without anxiety. Some days after my liberation from priſon, in the choir, at the ſame moment when I had given it her (that is, when we fall on our knees, and when, inclined towards each other, we diſappear in our ſeats), I felt myſelf pulled gently by my gown; I ſtretched out my hand and received a billet which contained only theſe words: "What terrible anxiety you have occaſioned me! "and what am I to do with that cruel paper?"— After reading this, I twiſted it in my hand, and ſwallowed it. All this happened at the beginning of Lent. The time was approaching when the curioſity of hearing the muſical performances attracts to Longchamp all the good and the bad company of Paris. My voice was exceedingly fine, though now a little ſpoilt. In theſe religious houſes, attention is paid to the moſt minute circumſtances that concern their intereſts; I was therefore treated with more attention and indulgence; I enjoyed a greater portion of liberty. The ſiſters whom I taught to ſing, were allowed to viſit me. She to whom I had confided my memorial was of the number. In the hours of recreation which we ſpent in the garden, I took her aſide; I made her ſing; and while ſhe ſung, I addreſſed her as follows: You have a great many

acquaintances, I have none. I do not wiſh you to expoſe yourſelf to the danger of detection; I ſhould prefer dying here, rather than expoſe you to the ſuſpicion of having ſerved me. I know, my friend, that it would occaſion your ruin without obtaining my deliverance; and although your ruin could accompliſh my ſafety, I ſhould not accept it at ſuch a price.... Don't ſpeak of that, ſaid ſhe; what is the ſervice you wiſh to have done?—I wiſh to have that memorial conveyed to ſome able advocate for conſultation, concealing, at the ſame time, the houſe from which it comes, and to obtain an anſwer, which you may put into my hands at church or elſewhere.—But what have you done with my billet? ſaid ſhe.—Let that give you no uneaſineſs; I ſwallowed it.—You likewiſe, ſaid ſhe, may keep your mind at eaſe; I will attend to your buſineſs.... You will obſerve, Sir, that I ſung while ſhe ſpoke to me, and that ſhe ſung while I replied, and that muſic was mingled with our converſation.

She did not fail very ſoon to keep her word, and ſhe communicated to me the information in our uſual manner. Holy week arrived. The concourſe of ſpectators to our *Tenebres* was numerous. I ſung ſo well as to excite thoſe tumultuous and ſcandalous marks of approbation which are beſtowed upon the comedians in your theatres, and which ought never to be heard in the temple of the Lord, eſpecially upon thoſe ſolemn and awful days devoted to celebrate the memory of the Son nailed to the croſs, for the expiation of the ſins of the human race. My young pupils were well prepared: ſome of them had good voices, almoſt all had expreſſion and taſte; and it ſeemed that the public had heard them with pleaſure, and that the community was ſatisfied with the ſucceſs of my cares.

You

You know, Sir, that upon Maundy Thurſday the holy ſacrament is tranſported from the tabernacle in which it is kept, to a particular altar, where it remains till Friday morning. This interval is employed in adoration by the nuns, who repair to the altar ſucceſſively, two and two. There is a liſt, which points out to each their hour of adoration. With what pleaſure did I read: Siſter Saint Suſan, and Siſter Saint Urſula, from two o'clock in the morning to three! I repaired to the altar at the appointed hour; my companion was there. We placed ourſelves together upon the ſteps of the altar: we proſtrated ourſelves, we worſhipped God for half an hour. At the end of this period, my young friend ſtretched out her hand to me, and preſſing mine, ſaid: Perhaps we ſhall never enjoy an opportunity of converſing ſo long, and ſo freely. God knows the conſtraint in which we live, and he will forgive us if we ſhare for our own concerns that time which ſhould be wholly dedicated to his ſervice. I have not read the memorial, but it is not difficult to gueſs its contents. I ſhall have the anſwer to it immediately; but if that anſwer ſhould encourage you to commence a ſuit to be enabled to renounce your vows, do you not obſerve that you muſt neceſſarily conſult with gentlemen of the law? —True—That for this purpoſe liberty is requiſite? —I know.—And that if you act wiſely, you will avail yourſelf of preſent circumſtances to procure it?—I have reflected upon that ſubject.—You will do it then?—I ſhall conſider.—One thing more: if your buſineſs ſhould be opened, you will remain here abandoned to all the fury of the community; have you foreſeen the perſecutions to which you will be expoſed?—They cannot be more ſevere than thoſe I have already ſuffered.—I don't know that. —Excuſe me, they will not dare at firſt to deprive

me

me of my liberty.—And why not?—Becauſe I ſhall be, as it were, placed between the world and the cloiſter. I ſhall poſſeſs the opportunity to ſpeak, the liberty to complain: I will ſummon you all as witneſſes: they will not venture to commit injuries whioh might furniſh me with ſubject of complaint; they will beware of doing any act which might render odious the cauſe they maintain. Nothing would be more acceptable to me, than the ill uſage they might inflict; but they will not act in this manner; be aſſured, they will purſue a very different courſe. They will beſet me with ſolicitations, they will repreſent the injury I am about to do to myſelf, and to the houſe; and depend upon it, they will not recur to menace, but when they diſcover that mildneſs and inſinuation are employed without ſucceſs; and that at all events they will forbear to put in practiſe any violent meaſures. —But it is incredible that you can have ſuch an averſion for a ſituation, the duties of which you perform with ſo much facility and exactneſs.—I feel that averſion in my own breaſt; it was engraved on my mind at my birth, and it never will be eraſed. I ſhall end by being a bad nun, and I muſt anticipate that moment. But if unfortunately you ſhould prove unſucceſsful! If I ſhould prove unſucceſsful, I will requeſt liberty to change my houſe. And if you do not obtain this favour, I will die.—We ſuffer much before we chooſe the alternative of death. Ah! my friend, I ſhudder at the conduct you purſue; I tremble leſt your vows ſhould be adjudged to be broken, and leſt they ſhould not. If they are, what courſe are you to follow? what will you do in the world? You have figure, wit, and talents; but theſe, they ſay, are of litttle ſervice when they are connected with virtue; and I know that you will not ſwerve from

the

the laſt.—You do juſtice to me, but not to virtue; upon it alone I depend; the leſs frequently it is to be found among mankind, the more it ought to be valued.—It is praiſed, but it is neglected.—It is virtue alone, however, that encourages and ſupports me in my deſign. Whatever may be objected to me, my morals muſt be reſpected. Of me at leaſt, it will not be ſaid, as of many others, that I was ſeduced from the ſtate to which I belonged by a criminal paſſion. I ſee nobody, I am acquainted with nobody. I demand my freedom, becauſe the ſacrifice of it was not voluntary. Did you read my memorial?—No; I opened the packet you gave me, becauſe it was without direction, and I was induced to think it intended for me; but the firſt lines undeceived me, and I went no farther. How happily were you inſpired with the idea of confiding it to me! a moment later it would have been found upon you.... But the hour which puts an end to our ſtation, approaches. Let us proſtrate ourſelves, that thoſe who ſucceed, may find us in the proper ſituation. Aſk of God to enlighten and to guide you; I will unite my prayers and my ſighs with yours.... My mind was now a little ſoothed. My companion prayed in an erect poſture, while I proſtrated myſelf, with my forehead leaning upon the loweſt ſtep of the altar, and my arms extended upon the upper ſteps. I do not believe that I ever addreſſed God with more conſolation and fervour. My heart palpitated with violence; in an inſtant I forgot every thing around me. I am ignorant how long I remained in this poſition, or how much longer I might have continued; but doubtleſs I preſented a very affecting ſpectacle to my companion, and the two nuns who arrived at the ſpot. When I roſe, I thought myſelf alone, I was miſtaken; all three were behind me, ſtanding, and bathed

bathed in tears. They had not ventured to interrupt me. They waited till I ſhould return to myſelf from that ſtate of tranſport and effuſion in which I appeared. When I directed my looks to that ſide on which they ſtood, my countenance muſt doubtleſs have poſſeſſed a very commanding character, if I may judge from the effect which it produced upon them, by the reſemblance they told me I bore at that moment to our former Superior, when ſhe uſed to impart to us ſpiritual conſolation, and by the emotions which my appearance had inſpired. Had I felt any bent to hypocriſy, or fanaticiſm, and had been diſpoſed to play a diſtinguiſhed part in the houſe, I have no doubt that I ſhould have ſucceeded. My ſoul was eaſily enflamed, exalted, tranſported; and a thouſand times our good Superior embracing me, has ſaid, that no perſon would have loved God with an ardour like mine; that I had a heart of fleſh, while others had hearts of ſtone. Certain it is, that I experienced an extreme facility in ſharing her extaſies. In the prayers which ſhe uttered aloud, it ſometimes happened that I would become the ſpeaker, follow the train of her ideas, and catch, as it were from inſpiration, a part of what ſhe herſelf would have ſaid. My companions heard her in ſilence, or were contented merely to follow, while I interrupted her effuſions, ſoared into a higher flight, and joined my voice to hers in accents of adoration. I very long preſerved the impreſſion I had taken, and it ſeemed as if ſome part of it was deſtined to be reſtored; for it uſed to be obſerved of others, that they had converſed with her, while it was perceived of her, that ſhe had converſed with me. But what ſignifies all this when the call no longer exiſts?.... The period of our ſtation being expired, we reſigned our place to thoſe who ſucceeded. My

young

young companion and I embraced each other very tenderly before we ſeparated.

The ſcene which had taken place at the altar, excited conſiderable attention in the houſe. The ſucceſs of our *Tenebres* on Good Friday likewiſe had its ſhare: I ſung, I played npou the organ, I was applauded. O giddy Nuns! I had ſcarcely any difficulty in reconciling myſelf to the whole members of the communty; they met me half way, and among the firſt, the Superior herſelf. My acquaintance was deſired by ſome people of the world, a circumſtance which correſponded too well with my project, to permit me to decline their advances. I was viſited by the chief Preſident, Madame de Soubiſe, and a number of perſons of diſtinction, by monks, by prieſts, ſoldiers, magiſtrates, by pious women, and by ladies of faſhion; and, among the reſt, by that kind of bucks you call *Talons Rouges*, whom I quickly diſmiſſed. I cultivated no acquaintance but thoſe which were unexceptionable; the reſt I reſigned to the nuns, who were not ſo nice.

I forgot to mention, that the firſt marks of kindneſs I received, was my re-eſtabliſhment in my cell. I had the courage to demand the reſtoration of the little picture of our former Superior, and they did not venture to refuſe the requeſt. It has reſumed its place at my breaſt, where it ſhall remain as long as I live. Every morning my firſt care is to raiſe my ſoul to God; my ſecond is to kiſs the portrait. When I am deſirous to pray, and when I feel my heart cold and languid, I take it from my neck, and place it before me. I gaze upon it, and receive inſpiration. It is much to be regretted, that we never were acquainted with the holy perſons whoſe images are expoſed to our veneration; for then they would ſtrike us with very different

different impreſſions. They would not allow us to remain at their feet, or in their preſence, with thoſe cold and lifeleſs feelings which we often experience.

I received the anſwer to my memorial from a M. Manouri, which was neither favourable or unfavourable. Before pronouncing upon this affair, a great many explanations were required, which it was difficult to furniſh without a perſonal interview. I then declared my name, and invited M. Manouri to come to Longchamp. Theſe gentlemen are not eaſily drawn from home; he came however. We had a very long converſation, and adjuſted a plan of correſpondence, by which he was to convey his queſtions with ſafety, and I to return my anſwers. On my ſide, I employed the whole interval during which he kept my buſineſs under conſideration, in conciliating favour and kindneſs, in diſpoſing people to take an intereſt in my fortune, and in endeavours to obtain protection. I told my name. I diſcloſed the circumſtances of my conduct in the firſt houſe in which I had lived, the hardſhips I had ſuffered in the houſe of my parents, the ſeveriry with which I had been treated in the convent, my remonſtrance at Saint-Mary's, my ſtay at Longchamp, my taking the habit, my profeſſion, with the cruelties that had been exerciſed againſt me after my vows were conſummated. My tale was heard with pity and commiſeration, and accompanied with offers of aſſiſtance: without farther explanation, I reſerved the kindneſs that was expreſſed in my favour, for an occaſion in which it might be neceſſary. Nothing tranſpired in the houſe. I had obtained permiſſion from Rome to proteſt againg my vows; the action was on the point of being inſtituted, without the remoteſt ſuſpicion on the ſubject being entertained. You may then conceive the ſurprize of my Superior, when

when ſhe received the intimation of a proteſt, in the name of Maria Suſan Simonin, againſt her vows, with a requeſt to be allowed to quit the religious habit, aud leave the cloiſter, and to regulate her future life as ſhe might think proper.

I had readily foreſeen that I ſhould experience various kinds of oppoſition, from the laws, from the religious houſe to which I belonged, and from the alarm with which my ſiſters and my brothers-in-law would be ſeized. Should I regain my freedom, their fortune might be conſiderably affected by the claims which it was in my power to advance. I wrote to my ſiſters, and entreated them to give no oppoſition to my leaving the convent; I appealed to their conſcience to bear witneſs to the little freedom with which my vows had been made. I offered to renounce, by an authentic inſtrument, every pretenſion to the ſucceſſion of my father and mother. I omitted no argument that could perſuade them, that the ſtep I had taken, was dictated neither by intereſt nor by paſſion. I was not ſanguine in the hopes of inſpiring them with ſentiments favourable to my deſign. This inſtrument which I propoſed to make, executed while I yet waa under religious engagements, became invalid; and they had too little ſecurity that I would ratify it when I recovered my liberty. And, although they had agreed to accept my propoſal, in what ſituation would they have been placed? Would they had left their ſiſter without fortune and without aſylum? Would they, in ſuch circumſtances, have retained poſſeſſion of her property? What would they have ſaid to the world in defence of ſuch a conduct? If ſhe come to us to beg ſupport, can we deny her ſolicitations? If ſhe is deſirous to marry, who can tell the ſituation of the man witb whom ſhe may form an alliance? And, if ſhe

ſhould

ſhould have children..... No We dare not conſent. We muſt oppoſe with all our might this dangerous attempt.... Such were their reflections, and ſuch were the principles upon which their conduct was founded.

Scarcely had the Superior received my application in legal form, when ſhe ran to my cell. How, Siſter Suſan! ſaid ſhe to me, you wiſh to leave us? —Yes, Madam.—And you are going to appeal from your vows?—Yes, Madam.—Have you not acted without conſtraint?—No, Madam.—And what has conſtrained you?—Every thing.—Your father?—My father.—Your mother?—The ſame. And why did not you remonſtrate at the foot of the altar?—I was ſo little myſelf, that I do not recollect even having ſtood by it.—How can you ſay ſo?—I ſpeak the truth.—What, did you not hear the prieſt aſk you: Siſter, and Suſan Simonin, do you promiſe to God, obedience, chaſtity, and poverty? —I have no recollection of it.—You did not anſwer, Yes?—I have no recollection of it.—And you imagine that people will believe this?—They may or may not believe it; but it is not the leſs true.—My dear child, if ſuch pretenſions were liſtened to, what dreadful abuſes would be the conſequence! You have taken an inconſiderate ſtep, you have ſuffered yourſelf to be miſled by a revengeful feeling; the chaſtiſements which you have obliged me to inflict upon you, ſtill rankle in your boſom; you think they are ſufficient to make you break your vows; you are wrong: it is an excuſe which cannot be ſuſtained either by God or man. Conſider, that perjury is the greateſt of all crimes; that you have already committed it in your heart, and that you are about to conſummate it.—I ſhall not be perjured, I have never been ſworn.—If you have ſuffered ſome injuries, have they not been repaired?

paired?—It is not upon theſe injuries that I ground my determination.—What is it then?—Upon the want of a call, upon my want of liberty in taking my vows. If you had no call, if you acted by conſtraint, might not you have ſaid ſo in time?—And what purpoſe would it have anſwered?—Might not you have diſplayed the ſame firmneſs that you did at Saint-Mary's?—Can we be anſwerable, at all times, for the firmneſs of our hearts? The firſt time I was firm; the ſecond time my weakneſs overcame me.—Might not you have called a lawyer? Might not you have entered a proteſt? You had four-and-twenty hours, in which you might have ſhewn proof of reluctance.—Did I know any thing about theſe forms? Though I had known them, was I in a ſtate to practiſe them, was it in my power? What! Madam, were not you yourſelf ſenſible of my derangement? Were I to call you as a witneſs, would you ſwear that I was ſound in mind?—If you call me, I ſhall ſwear it! Well, then, Madam, it is you, and not I, who are perjured.—My child, you are going to make a very needleſs noiſe. Recollect yourſelf, I conjure you, by your own intereſt, and that of the houſe: ſuch affairs are always attended with ſcandalous diſcuſſions.—This will not be my fault.—The people of the world are wicked; they will make ſuppoſitions the moſt unfavourable reſpecting your underſtanding, your heart, and your morals; they will think.....—whatever they pleaſe.—But ſpeak to me ingenuouſly; if you have any ſecret diſcontent, whatever it may be, it is capable of a remedy. I have been, I am, and I ſhall be diſſatisfied with my condition as long as I live.—Could the ſeducing ſpirit, which is continually watching us, and who lies in wait to deſtroy us, take advantage of the liberty which we have granted you lately, to inſpire

you

you with ſome fatal propenſity?—No, Madam; you know that I never took an oath without reluctance; I take God to witneſs, that my heart is innocent, and that it never knew a diſhonourable ſentiment.—This is inconceivable.—Nothing, Madam, is eaſier to be conceived. Every one has a character of her own, and I have mine: you love the monaſtic life, I hate it; you have the graces of your condition, and I do not poſſeſs them; you would be undone in the world, and here you ſecure your ſalvation; I ſhall ruin myſelf here, and I hope for ſalvation in the world: I am, and always ſhall be, a bad nun.—And, wherefore? There is no perſon who performs her duty better than you.—But it is with pain and reluctance.—You have the greater merit.—No perſon can know better than I do myſelf what I merit; and I am compelled to acknowledge, that in ſubmitting to every thing, I merit nothing. I am tired of the profeſſion of a hypocrite: in doing that which is the ſalvation of others, I render myſelf an object of deteſtation and condemnation. In a word, Madam, I know no true nuns but thoſe who are deſtined ſo by a taſte for retirement, and who would remain here, though they were confined neither by rails nor walls; I am far from being of this number: my body is here, but my heart is not; it is roaming at large; and were I to be under the neceſſity of chooſing between death, and perpetual confinement in the place where I now am, I would not heſitate to die. Theſe are my ſentiments.—How! could you quit, without remorſe, this veil. and theſe veſtments, which have conſecrated you to Jeſus Chriſt?—Yes, Madam; becauſe I aſſumed them without reflection, and under conſtraint..... I replied to her with a great deal of moderation, though it was not what my heart ſuggeſted;

ſuggeſted; it ſaid to me: Oh! that the moments, were come, when I could tear them off, and caſt them away!..... My anſwer threw her into a ſtate of violent agitation; ſhe turned pale; ſhe wiſhed to ſpeak, but her lips trembled, and ſhe did not know what to ſay to me. I walked at a quick pace backward and forward acroſs my cell; and ſhe cried out: O, my God! what will our ſiſters ſay! O, Jeſus! look down upon her with an eye of pity! Siſter Saint-Suſan.—Madam?—Is it then the part which you are to act? You mean to diſgrace us, to render us the ſubject of common talk, and to become the object of it yourſelf; to ruin yeurſelf!—I mean to go out of this place.—But, if it is only the houſe with which you are diſpleaſed.....—It is the houſe, it is my condition, it is the convent; I will not be confined either here or elſewhere.—Child, you are poſſeſſed with the Devil; it is he who agitates you, who makes you ſpeak ſo, who diſtracts you; it is an abſolute truth: ſee in what a ſtate you are!—In fact, I viewed myſelf, and I ſaw that my robe was all in diſorder, that my handkerchief was almoſt turned round, and that my veil was fallen back upon my ſhoulders, My patience was quite wearied out with the talk of this wicked Superior, who had always ſpoken to me in a mild deceitful tone; and I ſaid to her with indignation: No, Madam, no; I wiſh no more of this cloathing, I'll have no more of it.... In the mean while I attempted to adjuct my veil; but, from the tremor of my hands, the more I attempted to put it right, the worſe I made it; till at laſt, out of all patience, ſeized it with violence, tore it away, and threw it upon the ground; remaining in the preſence of my Superior, my forehead girt with a bandeau, and all my hair diſhevelled. In doubt whether ſhe ought to ſtay, ſhe walked about,

about, ſaying: O Jeſus! ſhe is poſſeſſed; it is an abſolute fact, ſhe is poſſeſſed!..... and the hypocrite, at the ſame time, croſſed herſelf with the croſs of her roſary. It was not long before I came to myſelf; I felt the indecency of my ſituation, and the imprudence of my diſcourſe; I compoſed myſelf, I took up my veil and put it on; then turning to her, I ſaid: Madam, I am neither mad nor poſſeſſed; I am aſhamed of my violence, and I aſk your pardon; but, judge from this circumſtance, how ill the religious ſtate becomes me, and how much I am juſtified in endeavouring to withdraw from it if I can.... Without attending to me, ſhe repeated: What will the world ſay? what will our ſiſters ſay?---Madam, ſaid I to her, do you wiſh to avoid an expoſure? there is one way of doing it. I do not reclaim my portion, I only aſk my liberty. I do not deſire you to open the gates to me, but take care only that to-day, to-morrow, or the day after, they will be ill-guarded, and don't diſcover my eſcape till as late as poſſible..... Wretch! how dare you make ſuch a propoſal as this to me?---It is an advice which a wiſe and good Superior ought to follow, with reſpect to thoſe for whom a convent is a priſon; and the convent is one to me: if the laws to which I have appealed, diſappoint my expectations, and if urged by the pangs of deſpair, with which I am already but too well acquainted.... you have a well.... There are windows in the houſe.... There are walls before me.... I have a robe which I can tear in pieces.... I have hands which I can uſe.... Stop, wretch! you make me tremble. What! you can.....---I can, on failure of the means of putting a ſudden end to the evils of life, refuſe nouriſhment: we may eat and drink, or not, as we pleaſe..... if I ſhould happen after what I have told you, that I

ſhould

ſhould have the courage, and you know that in this I am not deficient; and that it requires more ſometimes to ſupport life than to encounter death; tell me, conceiving yourſelf at the judgment of God, whether you or I would appear in his ſight the moſt guilty?..... Madam, I deſire nothing to be returned, I never will require any thing from the houſe; only ſpare me a crime, and ſpare yourſelf the cauſe of long remorſe: let us concert together....—Do you believe, Siſter Saint Suſan, that I can fail in my firſt duty, that I can be a party to crime, and that I can take a ſhare in ſacrilege!—It is I, Madam, who am guilty of ſacrilege every day, in profaning, by contempt, the ſacred habit which I wear. Take it from me, I am unworthy of it; ſend me out into the village in queſt of the rags which cover the pooreſt peaſant; let the door of the cloiſter be open for my eſcape.—And where will you go in order to be better?—I know not where I ſhall go; but evil is confined to thoſe ſituations, in which God does not intend that we ſhould live; and God never intended that I ſhould live in this convent.—You have nothing.—True; but poverty is not what I fear moſt.—Dread the diſorders to which it leads.—The paſt is my guarantee for the future; had I wiſhed to liſten to criminal ſolicitations, I ſhould now have been at liberty. But if I am to get out of this houſe, it ſhall be either with your conſent, or by the authority of the laws. Take your choice....

This converſation laſted for a conſiderable time. When I recollected what paſſed, I bluſhed at the imprudent and ridiculous things which I had done and ſaid, but it was too late: The Superior was ſtill repeating her exclamations: What will the world ſay! what will your ſiſters ſay! when the clock, which ſummoned us to ſervice, reminded

us

us to ſeparate. She ſaid to me at parting: Siſter Saint-Suſan, you are going to church; pray God to ſanctify you, and to give you the ſpirit of your condition; aſk your conſcience, and believe its dictates: it is impoſſible but it muſt reproach you. I diſpenſe with your ſinging.

We went down almoſt together. Service began; when it was finiſhed, and all the ſiſters were about to ſeparate, ſhe ſtruck the breviary with her hand, and ſtopped them. My ſiſters, ſaid ſhe to them, I deſire that you will throw yourſelves at the foot of the altar, and implore the mercy of God for a nun whom he has forſaken, who has loſt the ſpirit of devotion, and all taſte for the exerciſes of religion, and who is on the point of committing an action, ſacrilegious in the ſight of God, and diſgraceful in the eyes of man.

I cannot paint to you the general ſurpriſe; in an inſtant, every one, without ſtirring, looked round at the countenances of her companions, expecting to ſee the guilty perſon betrayed by her embarraſſment. They all proſtrated themſelves, and prayed in ſilence. After a pretty conſiderable ſpace of time, the Superior thundered, in a baſs voice, the *Veni Creator*, in which ſhe was followed by the reſt, in the ſame tone; after a ſecond interval of ſilence, ſhe knocked upon her deſk, and they all went out.

You may eaſily ſuppoſe the murmurs which were created in the community. Who is this? Who is it not! What has ſhe done? What does ſhe intend to do?.... Theſe ſuſpicions were not of long duration. My application was beginning to make a noiſe in the world; I received endleſs viſits, ſome bringing me reproaches, others advice; I had the approbation of ſome, and the cenſure of others. I had only one way of juſtifying myſelf in the view

of

of all, by informing them of the treatment I had received from my parents; and you may conceive what management was neceſſary upon this point; there were only a few perſons who continued ſincerely attached to me, beſide M. Manouri, to whom I had committed my caſe, and to whom I had entirely diſcloſed my ſentiments. When I was afraid of the torments with which I was menaced; and when the dungeon into which I had been once drgged, repreſented all its horrors to my imagination, (for I already knew the fury of nuns) I communicated my fears to M. Manouri, who ſaid to me: It is impoſſible for you to avoid every ſpecies of puniſhment, and you muſt lay your account with them; all that you can do, is to arm yourſelf with patience, and to ſupport them in the hopes of their termination. As for the dungeon, I promiſe you that you ſhall never return thither: I'll take care of that.... In fact, he brought an order to the Superior, in a few days, to bring me forth as often as ſhe ſhould be required.

Next morning, after ſervice, I was recommended to the public prayers of the community; they prayed in ſilence, and repeated the ſame hymn in a low voice, that they had chanted the preceding night. The ſame ceremony was performed on the third day, with this difference, that they ordered me to place myſelf in the middle of the choir, while they recited the prayers for the dying, and the litanies, with *ora pro ea*. The fourth day there occurred a piece of mummery, which ſtrongly marked the capricious character of the Superior. At the concluſion of the ſervice they made me lie down in a coffin, which was placed in the middle of the choir; ſhe ſet candleſticks by my ſide, with a pot of holy water; they covered me with a napkin, and recited the ſervice of the dead, after which every

nun, in paſſing, threw ſome holy water upon me, ſaying at the ſame time, *Requieſcat in pace.* It is neceſſary to underſtand the language of the convent, in order fully to comprehend the ſort of menace contained in theſe laſt words. Two of the nuns took off the napkin, put out the candles, and left me drenched to the ſkin with the water which they had malicouſly ſprinkled upon me. My clothes dried upon me, as I had not any others to change them. This mortification was followed by another. The community was aſſembled; they conſidered me as a reprobate; my conduct was treated as apoſtacy, and all the nuns were prohibited, on pain of diſobedience, to ſpeak to me, to aſſiſt me, to come near me, or even to touch the things I uſed. Theſe orders were rigorouſly executed. Our paſſages were ſo narrow, that in ſome places two perſons could ſcarcely paſs abreaſt. If I met any of the nuns, they either returned, or ſtood cloſe with their back to the wall, holding their veil and their clothes, for fear they ſhould touch mine. If they had any thing to receive from me, I put it upon the ground, and they took hold of it with a cloth: if they had any thing to give me, they threw it at me. If they were unfortunate enough to touch me, they believed themſelves polluted, and they went to confeſs, and to get abſolution from the Superior. It has been ſaid, that flattery is mean and contemptible; it is alſo extremely cruel, and very ingenious, when it purpoſes to pleaſe by the mortifications which it invents. I was deprived of all employment, as unworthy. At church they left a pew empty on each ſide of that which I occupied. I ſat at table alone in the hall; they would not ſerve me: I was under the neceſſity of going to the kitchen to aſk for my allowance; the firſt time, ſiſter cook called out to me, Don't come here!....

I obeyed

I obeyed her.—What do you want?—Food—Food! you do not deſerve to live.....—Sometimes I returned, and ſpent the day without nouriſhment; ſometimes I urged my demand, till at laſt they would place upon the threſhold meat which it would have been ſhameful to have offered to a dog; I wept while I took it up, and went away. If at any time I happened to arrive laſt at the door of the choir, I found it ſhut; I knelt down on my knees, and there waited the concluſion of the ſervice. If it was in the garden, I returned to my cell. My ſtrength however declining from the little nouriſhment I received, from the bad quality of what I uſed, and ſtill more from the difficulty with which I endured ſo many reiterated marks of inhumanity, I felt that if I perſiſted in ſuffering without complaint, I ſhould never ſee my ſuit brought to a concluſion. I reſolved therefore to ſpeak to the Superior. Although half dead with terror, I went and knocked at her door. She opened it, and ſeeing me, ſhrunk back ſeveral ſteps, ſaying: Apoſtate! be gone.—I withdrew.—Again...—I retired once more.—What do you want?—Since neither God nor man has condemned me to die, I requeſt, Madam, that you would give orders that I ſhould be ſupplied with the means of ſupporting life.—Life! ſaid ſhe, repeating the obſervation of the cook, are you worthy of enjoying that bleſſing?—God alone knows that; but I warn you, if nouriſhment is denied me, I ſhall be compelled to carry my complaints to thoſe who have taken me under their protection. Here I remain only as a depoſit, till my fortune and my ſtate be decided.—Begone, ſaid ſhe, do not pollute me with the ſight of you, I ſhall attend to your requeſt.... I went away, and ſhe ſhut the door after me with violence. She probably gave orders, but I was treated with hardly

any more attention. They deemed it a merit to diſobey her; they continued to ſend me the coarſeſt victuals, and they would even render them more diſguſting, by mixing them with aſhes, and every ſpecies of filth.

Such was the life I led while my ſuit was pending. I was not entirely diſcharged from appearing in the parlour; they could not deprive me of the liberty of conferring with my judges and with my advocate, although the latter was often obliged to employ threats to obtain an interview with me. Even then I was attended by one of the ſiſters, who complained if I ſpoke low, raged if I ſtaid too long, interrupted, contradicted me, gave me the lie; repeated to the Superior my converſation, altered its import and miſrepreſented its tendency; and perhaps imputed to me language which I had never employed! They even went ſo far as to rob me, to ſtrip me of every thing I poſſeſſed, to carry off my chairs, my coverlets and my quilt. I received no more clean linen; my clothes were in tatters, and I was almoſt deſtitute of ſhoes and ſtockings. I had the utmoſt difficulty to procure a little water; often have I myſelf been obliged to go and bring it from the well, that well which I have already mentioned: they broke my utenſils; till at laſt I was obliged to drink the water I had drawn, without the poſſibility of conveying it to my apartment. If I paſſed under the windows, I was forced to run, or expoſe myſelf to the inſults with which I was aſſailed from the cells. Some of the ſiſters have even ſpit in my face. I became careleſs of my perſon, to a degree that rendered me hideous. As they were apprehenſive of the complaints I might make to our directors, I was prohibited from confeſſion. One great feſtival day, I believe it was that of the Aſcenſion, they contrived to derange my lock; I could not appear

at

at maſs, and perhaps ſhould have been abſent from all the other ſervices, had I not received a viſit from M. Manouri, whom they told at firſt that they knew not what was become of me; that I was no longer to be ſeen, and that I performed no action which chriſtianity required. After a great deal of trouble, however, I removed the lock of my door, and repaired to the door of the choir, which I found ſhut, as uſually happened when I did not arrive among the firſt. I had lain down upon the ground, with my head and back leaning againſt one of the walls, my arms acroſs my breaſt, while the reſt of my body, extended, cloſed up the paſſages. When the ſervice ended, and the nuns preſented themſelves in order to retire, the firſt ſtopped ſhort, the reſt followed immediately behind her. The Superior ſuſpected the matter, and ſaid, Walk over her, it is nothing but a dead body.... Some of them obeyed, and trod upon me; others were leſs inhuman; but none of them ventured to offer their hand to raiſe me up. During my abſence, they had carried off from my cell my little prayer deſk, the portrait of our foundreſs, the reſt of the pious images, and the crucifix; I had nothing left, but that which I carried at my roſary, and this too I was not long allowed to preſerve; I lived then between four bare walls, in a room without a door, and without a chair to ſit down upon; ſtanding or ſtretched on a pallet of ſtraw, deprived of the moſt neceſſary utenſils, and therefore compelled to go out by night; while next day I was accuſed of diſturbing the repoſe of the houſe, of wandering about, and reproached with having loſt my underſtanding. As my cell was now unlocked, they would enter tumultuouſly during the night; they ſhouted, diſplaced my bed, broke my windows, and did every thing which could inſpire me with affright.

The noiſe ſeemed to mount up, and then to deſcend; and thoſe who were not in the plot, ſaid that ſtrange things paſſed in my apartment; that they had heard diſmal ſounds, cries, clanking of chains; that I held converſe with ghoſts and wicked ſpirits; that I muſt needs have made a covenant with the devil; and that it was high time to leave the part of the houſe where I lived. There are in every community, a number of weak heads: they even compoſe a majority. Theſe believed every word they heard; were afraid to paſs my door; their perturbed imagination repreſented my form to them as hideous and frightful; when they chanced to meet me, they made the ſign of the croſs, and retired with the utmoſt ſpeed, crying: Away from me, Satan! My God, come to my aid!..! One of the youngeſt happening to be at the bottom of the paſſage, I was advancing to her, and there was no poſſibility of avoiding me. She was ſeized with the moſt terrible fright. Firſt ſhe turned to the wall, muttering in a tremulous tone: My God! My God! Jeſus! Mary! I continued to advance. When ſhe perceived that I was near her, ſhe covered her face with her hands, that ſhe might not ſee me; and ſpringing forward, precipitated herſelf into my arms: and then what cries of mercy! I am loſt! Siſter Saint Suſan, do not hurt me! Siſter Saint Suſan, have pity upon me!... And with theſe words down ſhe dropped, half dead, upon the floor. Her cries aſſembled a number of the ſiſters; ſhe was carried away; and it is impoſſible for me to deſcribe how this accident was miſrepreſented. It was converted into an affair of the moſt criminal nature. It was ſaid that the demon of impurity had taken poſſeſſion of my ſoul; deſigns and actions, which I cannot name, were imputed to me; and deſires of a ſtrange and extravagant deſcription, to

which

which the diſorder the young nun had fallen into, was aſcribed. I am not a man indeed, and do not underſtand the ſuſpicions to which two women, much leſs a ſingle woman, may be ſubject; yet, as my bed had no curtains, and they entered my apartment at all hours, I muſt confeſs, Sir, that according to my ideas, with all their ſeeming reſerve, the modeſty of their looks, the chaſtity of their expreſſions, the hearts of theſe women muſt have been greatly corrupted. They knew at leaſt that improper actions were committed by a perſon in private, of which I was entirely ignorant, and therefore never perfectly comprehended the nature of the accuſations under which I laboured; and they expreſſed themſelves in terms ſo obſcure, that I never knew what anſwer was to be made to their charge. Were I to purſue the detail of my perſecutions, my ſtory would never end. Ah! Sir, if you have children of your own, learn from my fate the ſufferings you prepare for them, if you permit them to embrace the religious life, without the ſtrongeſt and moſt deciſive marks of vocation. How unjuſt, how inconſiſtent is the conduct of people in the world! A girl is allowed to diſpoſe of her liberty at an age when ſhe would not be allowed to diſpoſe of a guinea. Put your daughter to death, rather than impriſon her in a cloiſter againſt her inclinations; put her to death without heſitation. How often have I wiſhed that my mother had ſtifled me at my birth! She then had been leſs cruel than ſhe was. Could you ſeriouſly believe that I was deprived of my breviary, and forbidden to pray to God? You may well imagine that I did not obey this injunction. Alas, it was the only conſolation I poſſeſſed. I would raiſe my hands to heaven; I breathed the accents of ſuffering; and I ventured to hope that they were heard by the only Being

who witneſſed the whole extent of my miſery. They liſtened at my door; and one day, when I was addreſſing myſelf to God, in the anguiſh of my heart, and imploring his aſſiſtance, they ſaid to me: You implore God in vain, there is no God for you; die, deſperate wretch, and be damned.—Others added Amen; ſuch be the lot of the apoſtate! Amen, ſuch be hers!

But the following is an incient that you will conſider more extraordinary than any other. I cannot determine whether it was the effect of malice or of illuſion. The circumſtance, however, was this. Although no part of my conduct diſcovered a diſordered mind, much leſs a mind poſſeſſed by the infernal ſpirit, they held a deliberation whether it was not neceſſary to exerciſe me, and, by a plurality of voices, they concluded that I had renounced my chriſm and my baptiſm; that I was poſſeſſed by the demon, and that his influence eſtranged me from divine ſervices. Another added, that at certain prayers I gnaſhed my teeth, ſhuddered in the church, and twiſted my arms during the elevation of the holy ſacrament. According to ſome, I trampled upon the croſs; I no longer carried my roſary (which by the way they had ſtolen;) I uttered blaſphemies too dreadful to be repeated. All agreed that there was ſomething unnatural about me, of which the Grand Vicar muſt be appriſed. This was accordingly done.

The Grand Vicar was a M. Hebert, a man of age and experience, blunt in his character, but juſt and enlightened. He was informed, in full detail, of the diſorder which prevailed in the houſe; and certain it is that it was not inconſiderable, and that if the cauſe could be imputed to me, it was of a nature perfectly innocent. You may eaſily imagine, that in the memorial which was laid before him,

they

they did not omit my nocturnal perambulations, my abſence from the choir, the tumults which happened in my apartment, the ſtrange ſights which ſome had ſeen, the extraordinary ſounds which others had heard, my averſion to ſpiritual exerciſes, the blaſphemies of which I was guilty, and the obſcenities with which I was charged. The adventure of the young nun they repreſented in any light which their imagination choſe to ſupply. The accuſations were ſo ſtrong, and ſo numerous, that, with all his good ſenſe, M. Hebert could not help, in ſome meaſure, conſidering them in a ſerious point of view, and believing that they contained a great deal of truth. The affair appeared to him of ſo much importance, as to require a perſonal examination, that he might be able to judge of its real ſituation. He announced his intended viſit, and he actually arrived, accompanied by two young eccleſiaſtics who had been appointed to attend him, and who relieved him by their aſſiſtance in the diſcharge of the laborious part of the duties he had to fulfil.

A few days before his arrival, I heard a perſon ſoftly enter my chamber at midnight. I remained ſilent, while I was addreſſed in a low and tremulous voice: Siſter Saint Suſan, are you aſleep?—No. Who is there?—It is I.—Who are you?—A friend of yours who is overwhelmed with terror, and who expoſes herſelf to ruin to communicate to you a piece of intelligence, from which perhaps you can derive no advantage. Attend; to-morrow or next day a viſit from the Grand Vicar is expected; you are to be accuſed; prepare for your defence. Adieu; have courage, and God be with you.... Saying this, ſhe glided away with the ſwiftneſs of a ſhadow. You ſee, there are every where, even

in religious houſes, hearts of a compaſſionate diſpoſition, which no circumſtances can harden.

All this while, my ſuit was proſecuted with vigour. Crowds of people of every ſituation, of both ſexes, and all conditions, with whom I was unacquainted, intereſted themſelves in my fortune, and ſolicited in my favour. You were of this number, and perhaps you are better acquainted than I am with the hiſtory of my cauſe, for at laſt I was not permitted to converſe with M. Manouri. He was told that I was ſick. He ſuſpected that they meant to deceive him; he trembled leſt they had thrown me into the dungeon. He applied to the Archbiſhop's court, but they did not even deign to give him a hearing; they had been prepoſſeſſed with the idea that I was mad, or ſomething worſe. He had recourſe to the interpoſition of the civil court, and inſiſted upon the execution of the order intimated to the Superior, to preſent me, dead or alive, when ſhe was ſummoned to that effect. The ſecular Judges encroached upon the functions of the eccleſiaſtical courts. The latter were aware of the conſequences which this incident might produce, if they failed to obviate the cauſe; and this, in all probability accelerated the viſit of the Grand Vicar; for theſe gentlemen, harraſſed by the eternal broils of the convent, are very unwilling to interfere, becauſe they know by experience, that their authority is always eluded and deſpiſed.

I availed myſelf of the advice of my friend, to implore the aſſiſtance of God, to collect my ſpirits, and to prepare for my defence. Of heaven, I only entreated the happineſs of being interrogated and heard with impartiality; I obtained this requeſt; but I am now to inform you at what price. If it was my intereſt to appear to the Judge innocent

and

and rational, it was of no leſs importance to the Superior that I ſhould be conſidered vicious, guilty, diſtracted, poſſeſſed by the infernal ſpirit. Accordingly, in proportion as I redoubled the fervour of prayers and the exerciſes of devotion, they redoubled the miſchievous tricks with which I was tormented. I received no nouriſhment but what was barely neceſſary to prevent my dying of hunger; I was harraſſed and exhauſted with mortifications; terrors of every kind were multiplied around me; of the refreſhment of ſleep I was utterly deprived. They put in practice every thing which could deſtroy my health and derange my mind. They exerciſed a refinement of cruelty, of which you can form no idea. Judge of the reſt from the following inſtance:—One day, when I was going from my cell to church, or elſewhere, I ſaw a pair of tongs upon the ground acroſs the paſſage. I ſtooped to take them up, and place them in ſuch a manner, that they might eaſily be found by the perſon who had miſlaid them. The light prevented me from obſerving that they were almoſt red; I took hold of them, but in dropping them again they carried along with them all the ſkin of the inſide of my hand. In the places through which I had to paſs, they continued to throw in my way ſomething or other, either to catch my feet, or to ſtrike my head. An hundred times have I been wounded ſeverely; I wonder how I eſcaped with my life. I was not allowed any light to direct me, and I was obliged to proceed trembling, with my hands before me groping the way. They uſed to ſcatter broken glaſs under my feet. I was fully determined to diſcloſe all theſe circumſtances, and I pretty exactly kept my word. I often found the doors of the conveniencies ſhut, and was compelled to deſcend ſeveral ſtories, and run to the bottom

bottom of the garden, when I found the door open; and when I did not.... Ah! Sir, what malicious creatures are theſe recluſe women, who know well that they ſecond the hatred of their Superior, and who imagine that they ſerve God, by tormenting you to death! The time was now arrived, when the viſit of the Archdeacon was to take place; the time was now come when my ſuit was to be terminated.

In reality, this was the moſt terrible moment of my whole life; for conſider, Sir, that I was abſolutely ignorant of the colours under which I had been repreſented to this eccleſiaſtic, and that he came with the curioſity of ſeeing a girl poſſeſſed by the infernal ſpirit, or counterfeiting that ſituation. My perſecutors imagined, that nothing but a violent fright could diſplay me under this appearance, and they adopted the following method to effect their purpoſe.

Upon the day the viſit was expected, the Superior entered my room very early in the morning, accompanied by three ſiſters, one carrying a veſſel of holy water, the other a crucifix, the third a bundle of cords. The Superior ſaid to me in a harſh and threatening tone: Riſe....I roſe.—Kneel down upon your knees and recommend yourſelf to God.—Madam, ſaid I, before I obey your command, may I aſk you what is to be my fate? what are the ſufferings to which you have doomed me? and what requeſts I ought to addreſs to God? ....A cold perſpiration overſpread my body, I trembled, I felt my knees ſink under me, I gazed with fright upon her three fatal companions. They were ſtanding in a row, with gloomy ill-boding countenances, their lips cloſe, and their eyes ſhut. Terror had diſconnected every word of the queſtion I aſked; from the ſilence which they preſerved,

I imagined

I imagined that I had not been underſtood. Again I began to repeat the laſt words of the queſtion, for I had not courage to go over the whole; in a feeble and half-extinguiſhed voice I then ſaid: What petition muſt I addreſs to God?...They replied: Implore his forgiveneſs for all the ſins you have committed in the courſe of your life; addreſs him in the ſame manner as if you were about to appear before him.... At theſe words I believed that they had determined upon my deſtruction. I had heard, indeed, that ſimilar practices ſometimes occurred in the convents of certain religious orders of your ſex; that they tried, condemned to death, and conſigned to puniſhment. I never had conceived, however, that this inhuman juriſdiction was exerciſed in any convent of women; but there were many other things which never entered my imagination, that were there practiſed. At the idea of immediate death I felt an inclination to cry, but my mouth opened, and no ſound could I utter. I advanced to the Superior in a ſuppliant poſture, but my body refuſed its ſervice, and I ſunk backwards. I fell, but my fall was not ſevere. At theſe moments, when our ſtrength forſakes us, when we ſwoon away, the members drop inſenſibly from each other; they, as it were, weigh each other down, and nature, unable to ſupport herſelf, ſeems anxious to prepare a gentle fall for her wearied powers. I loſt all ſenſe and feeling; I only heard around me a burſt of confuſed and diſtant voices, either of perſons ſpeaking, or which aroſe from the ringing in my ears; I diſtinguiſhed nothing but this ringing, which continued. I am ignorant how long I remained in this ſituation, but I was recovered from it by a ſudden ſenſation of cold, which occaſioned a ſlight convulſion, and drew from me a deep ſigh. I was immerſed in water, which ſtreamed

ſtreamed from my clothes to the ground; it was the contents of a large veſſel of holy water, which they had daſhed over my body. I lay upon my ſide, ſtretched out in this water, with my head leaning againſt the wall, my mouth half open, my eyes almoſt ſet, and quite cloſed. I endeavoured to open them, and to look at objects; but it ſeemed to me as if I had been enveloped in a thick atmoſphere, through which I diſcovered nothing but a floating robe, on which I attempted to lay hold, but without ſucceſs. I made an effort with the arm which was at liberty (upon the other I was ſupported); I attempted to raiſe it, but it was too heavy; my extreme weakneſs ſubſided by degrees; I raiſed myſelf up, leaning my back againſt the wall, my two hands immerſed in the water, my head reclining upon my breaſt. In this ſituation I uttered a deep-drawn note of complaint, in faltering broken accents, rendered inarticulate by the preſſure under which I ſtruggled. Theſe women gazed on me with an expreſſion of countenance, that diſplayed a rigour ſo invincible, and an inflexibility ſo obdurate, as left me no courage to ſolicit their compaſſion. The Superior ſaid: Place her upright.....They took me by the arms, and raiſed me up. The Superior added: Since ſhe will not recommend herſelf to God, ſo much the worſe for her; you know what you have to do, complete your taſk....I imagined that the cords they had brought along with them were intended to ſtrangle me; I looked at them, while the tears ſtarted into my eyes. I craved permiſſion to kiſs the cruciſix, but my requeſt was refuſed. I aſked leave to kiſs the cords, which were immediately preſented: I leaned forward, took the Superior's ſcapulary, kiſſed it, and ſaid: My God, have compaſſion upon me! my God, have compaſſion upon me! Dear

ſiſters,

ſiſters, endeavour to ſpare me unneceſſary pain.... I then preſented my neck. It is impoſſible for me to deſcribe the ſtate into which I ſunk, or in what manner they now treated me; certain it is, that perſons who are conducted to puniſhment, and ſuch was my ſituation, are dead before they are executed. When I recovered the uſe of my ſenſes, I found myſelf ſeated upon the pallet of ſtraw which formed my bed, my hands tied behind my back, with a large iron croſs upon my knees... I ſee, Sir, at this diſtance, all the trouble which I occaſion you; but you expreſſed a wiſh to know whether I in any degree deſerved the compaſſion which I expect from your goodneſs.

It was at this time that I experienced the ſuperiority of chriſtianity above all the religions in the world, and diſcovered the profound wiſdom contained in what blind philoſophy calls the fooliſhneſs of the croſs. In the ſituation in which I was placed, what conſolation could I have derived from the contemplation of a fortunate legiſlator, covered with glory? I ſet before me him that was without offence, crowned with thorns, his hands and feet pierced with nails, and expiring in agonies. I then would ſay to myſelf: Behold the ſituation of my God, and dare I complain?....I dwelt upon this idea, and I felt conſolation ſpringing up again in my heart. I knew the vanity of life, and I thought myſelf too happy to loſe it before I had time to multiply my tranſgreſſions. Yet I reckoned my years, and found that I was hardly nineteen years of age, and I ſighed. I was too much weakened, too much depreſſed, to allow my mind to riſe ſuperior to the terrors of death. In perfect health, I believe that I ſhould have been able to take my reſolution with greater fortitude.

In

In the mean time, the Superior and her ſatellites returned, and found me poſſeſſed of greater preſence of mind than they expected, and than they would have wiſhed. They raiſed me up; they put on my veil; two of them ſupported me under the arms, a third puſhed me from behind, and the Superior ordered me to walk. I went without knowing whither I was going; under the apprehenſion, however, that I was about to be puniſhed, I ſaid: My God, have pity upon me! My God, ſupport me! My God, do not forſake me! Pardon me, my God, if I have offended thee!

I entered the church. The Grand Vicar had celebrated maſs, the community was aſſembled. I forgot to tell you, that when I had got the length of the church door, the three nuns who had the charge of me, ſeized me faſt, puſhed me with violence, and ſeemed to ſtruggle about me; thoſe who held my arms dragging me on, while the reſt, who were behind, kept me back, as if I had been reſiſting, and ſhewing ſigns of repugnance to enter the church, which was by no means the caſe. They conducted me to the ſteps of the altar; I had ſcarce aſcended them, when they pulled me down upon my knees, as if I had refuſed to kneel; they held me as if I had an intention of making my eſcape. They chanted the *Veni Creator*, laid out the holy ſacrament, and pronounced the bleſſing. At that part of the bleſſing, where they teſtify veneration by an inclination of the body, thoſe who held my arms affected to uſe compulſion in making me bow, and the reſt leaned their hands upon my ſhoulders. I was ſenſible of all theſe various movements, but it was impoſſible for me to deviſe their object; ſoon after however, every thing was developed.

After

After the bleſſing, the Grand Vicar diveſted himſelf of his chaſuble, put on his albe and his ſtole, and advanced towards the ſteps of the altar, where I was upon my knees; he was between two eccleſiaſtics, with his back turned upon the altar, upon which the holy ſacrament was laid out, and his face directed to my quarter. He approached me, and ſaid: Siſter Suſan, riſe....The ſiſters who held me ſuddenly raiſed me up; others came round me and ſeized me by the middle, as if they were afraid leſt I ſhould make my eſcape. He added, Let her be untied....They did not obey, but pretended to be aware of the inconvenience or danger of ſetting me at liberty; but I have told you that this was a ſpirited man; and he repeated, in a firm and ſevere tone, Let her be untied.... They obeyed. Scarcely were my hands at liberty, when I uttered a woeful piercing cry, which made him turn pale, and the hypocritical nuns, who were about me, run away as if affrighted. He recovered himſelf; the ſiſters returned with trembling ſteps; I remained motionleſs, and he ſaid to me, What ails you?....I made no reply, but ſhewed him my two arms; the cord with which they had bound me had entered almoſt entirely into the fleſh, and the blood, which had been prevented from circulating, and which was now extravaſated, gave them a purple hue; he conceived that my cry aroſe from the ſudden affection occaſioned by the blood reſuming its courſe. He ſaid, Let her veil be taken off. They had ſtitched it in ſeveral places without my knowledge, which rendered this a more difficult and violent operation than it would otherwiſe have been: it behoved the prieſt to ſee me beſet, poſſeſſed, or mad; in the mean while, from the force employed in tearing it off, the threads gave way in ſome places, and the veil,

or

or my habit being rent in others, he had an opportunity of ſeeing me. I had an intereſting figure; deep ſorrow had altered, but not deſtroyed its character; the tones of my voice were pathetic, and they were ſenſible that my expreſſion was undiſſembled. The union of theſe qualities made a ſtrong impreſſion of pity upon the young attendants of the Archdeacon: as for him, he was entirely ignorant of ſuch ſentiments; juſt, but poſſeſſed of little ſuſceptibility, he was one of thoſe who have the misfortune to be born to practice virtue, without experiencing any pleaſure in it; they do good from a principle of fitneſs, as they call it. He took the ſleeve of his ſtole, and putting it upon my head, he ſaid to me: Siſter Suſan, do you believe in God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?—I replied:—I do.—Do you believe in the holy church our mother?—I do.—Do you renounce Satan and his works?—Inſtead of anſwering I moved ſuddenly forward, and cried out, and his ſtole fell off my head. He was troubled, his companions turned pale; ſome of the ſiſters ran away, others of them, who were in their ſtalls, left them in the greateſt confuſion. He made a ſignal to them to compoſe themſelves; he looked earneſtly at me, expecting ſomething to take place. He took courage on my ſaying to him, Sir, it is nothing; it was one of theſe nuns who pricked me with ſomething ſharp; and, raiſing my eyes and my hands to heaven, while I ſhed a flood of tears, I added: It is becauſe they hurt me at the very moment when you aſked me if I renounced Satan and his works; their reaſon for which I will know.....They all proteſted, in the voice of the Superior, that they had not touched me. The Archdeacon replaced his ſtole upon my head, and the nuns were again drawing near, but he made a

ſignal

ſignal to them to keep at a diſtance; and he repeated the queſtion to me, if I renounced Satan and his works, to which I replied with firmneſs: I renounce them, I renounce.....He made them bring a Chriſt, which he preſented to me to kiſs; and I kiſſed it upon the feet, upon the hands, and upon the wound in his ſide. He commanded me to worſhip it in a loud voice; I fell upon the earth, and upon my knees I ſaid: "My God, my Saviour, "thou who diedſt upon the croſs for my ſins, and "thoſe of the human race, I adore thee; apply to "me the merits of thoſe torments which thou "enduredſt; touch me with a drop of that precious "blood which thou haſt ſhed, and I ſhall be "purified. Pardon me, my God, as I pardon my "enemies....." He then ſaid to me, Make a deed of faith....and I made it. Make a deed of love.... and I made it. Make a deed of hope....and I made it. Make a deed of charity....and I made it. I do not recollect the terms in which they were conceived, but I think they muſt have been pathetic, for I drew ſighs from ſome of the nuns, and two of the young eccleſiaſtics ſhed tears: the Archdeacon aſked me, with aſtoniſhment, where I got the prayers which I had juſt now recited. I ſaid, They come from the bottom of my heart, and I take God to witneſs, who hears every thing, and who is preſent at this altar, that they are my thoughts and ſentiments. I am a chriſtian, I am innocent; if I have been guilty of ſome faults, God only knows them, and none but he has a right to aſk for an account of them, or to puniſh them.... When I uttered theſe words, he caſt a terrible look upon the Superior.

The reſt of the ceremony being finiſhed, in which the Majeſty of God was inſulted, things the moſt ſacred profaned, and the miniſter of the church

church rendered ridiculous; all the nuns retired, except the Superior, who remained with me and the young eccleſiaſtics. The Archdeacon ſat down, and taking out a memorial which they had preſented to him againſt me, he read it aloud, and queſtioned me upon the articles which it contained. Why, ſaid he to me, don't you confeſs?—Becauſe they will not permit me.—Why don't you attend at the ſacraments?—Becauſe they will not permit me.—Why don't you aſſiſt at Maſs, and at divine ſervice?—Becauſe they will not permit me. Here the Superior wiſhed to ſpeak, but he ſaid to her in the ſame tone, Be ſilent, Madam....Why do you go out of your cell at night?—Becauſe they have deprived me of water and every neceſſary accommodation.—How comes there to be a noiſe in your bed-room, and in your cell?—Becauſe they will not allow me to take repoſe. Here the Superior attempted a ſecond time to ſpeak, and he ſaid to her, Madam, I have told you to be ſilent; you will have an opportunity of anſwering when I interrogate you....How happened it that they were obliged to extricate a nun from your hands, whom they found thrown down in the paſſage?—It is the conſequence of the horror at me, with which they had inſpired her.—Is ſhe your friend?—No, Sir.—Were you never in her cell?—Never.—Did you never do any thing improper, either to her, or to others?—Never.—Why did they bind you?—I don't know.—Why is not the door of your cell ſhut?—Becauſe I have broken the lock.—Why did you break the lock?—To get out, in order to aſſiſt at ſervice on the aſcenſion-day.—You were at church then on that day?—Yes, Sir....—The Superior ſaid, Sir, it is not true, all the community ....I interrupted her....I will teſtify that the door of the choir was ſhut; that they found me proſtrated.

ed at this door, and that you ordered them to trample upon me, which ſome of them did; but I forgive them, and you Madam, for having ordered them; I am not come to accuſe any perſon, but to defend myſelf.—Why have you neither a roſary, nor a crucifix?—Becauſe they have taken them from me.—Where is your breviary?—They have taken that alſo.—How can you pray then?—I pray from the heart, though they have prohibited me from doing it.—Who is it that iſſued the prohibition?—Madam....Here the Superior was ſtill going to ſpeak. Madam, ſaid he to her, is it true or falſe, that you have prohibited her from praying? Say yes, or no.—I believed, and I had reaſon to believe....—This is not to the purpoſe; have you prohibited her from praying; Yes, or No?—I have prohibited her, but....—She was about to continue, when the Archdeacon reſumed, But Siſter Suſan, how come your feet to be naked? —Becauſe they will not furniſh me either with ſtockings or ſhoes.—Why are your linen and your clothes ſo old and dirty?—Becauſe they have refuſed me linen for more than three months, and I am obliged to ſleep in my clothes.—Why do you ſleep in your clothes?—Becauſe I have neither curtains, mattraſs, blankets, ſheets, nor night dreſs.—Why have not you them?—Becauſe they have taken them from me.—Do you get food?—I aſk for it.—You don't get it then?—I was ſilent, and he added, It is incredible that they can have uſed you with ſo much ſeverity, without your having committed ſome fault to merit it.—My fault is having no call to the religious ſtate, and recalling my vows, which I never made voluntarily! —It is for the laws to decide upon this affair; and however they may pronounce upon it, it is incumbent on you in the mean time to diſcharge the duties

duties of the religious life.—No perſon, Sir, is more punctual than I am.—You muſt ſhare the lot of all your companions.—That is all I aſk.—Have you no complaint to make againſt any one?—No, Sir; I have told you, that I am not come here as an accuſer, but for the purpoſe of defending myſelf.—Go away.—Where ſhall I go, Sir?—To your cell.—I took a few ſteps and then returned, and proſtrated myſelf at the feet of the Superior, and of the Archdeacon. Well, ſaid he to me, what is the matter?—I ſaid to him, You ſee! ſhewing him at the ſame time, my head bruiſed in ſeveral places, my feet bloody, my arms livid, and without fleſh; my clothes dirty and torn.

I think I hear you, Mr. Marquis, and moſt of thoſe who read theſe Memoirs, ſay, "Horrors ſo "multiplied, ſo varied, ſo continued; a ſeries of "atrocities ſo monſtrous engendered in the hearts "of nuns! it is not very probable....!" I grant it, but it is true; and may Heaven, which I now call to witneſs, judge me with the utmoſt rigour, and doom me to eternal fire, if I have ſuffered calumny to darken one of my lines with its ſlighteſt ſhade! Though I have long experienced how much the averſion of a Superior can ſtimulate her natural perverſity, particularly when it is ſuch as to make a merit of crime, and to applaud and to boaſt of guilt, reſentment ſhall never prevent me from being juſt. The more I reflect, the more I am perſuaded, that what has happened to me, never did happen, and perhaps never will happen to another. Once, (and God grant the firſt time may be the laſt!) Providence, whoſe views are unknown to us, has been pleaſed to heap upon a ſingle unfortunate individual, all the maſs of cruelties, divided in its inſcrutable decrees among an infinite multitude who have preceded, and who ſhall ſucceed

her

her in the cloiſter. I have ſuffered, I have ſuffered much; but the lot of my perſecutors ſeems ſtill more deplorable than mine. I would rather, I would much rather die, than give up my ſituation, on condition of accepting theirs. My pains will be brought to a concluſion, I hope, by the exertion of your goodneſs: the remembrance, ſhame, and remorſe of crime, will live with them till their lateſt hour. They now reproach themſelves; without doubt, they will reproach themſelves as long as they live, and terror will deſcend with them to the tomb: in the mean time, Mr. Marquis, my preſent ſituation is deplorable: life is committed to me as a charge; I am a woman; I am ſubject to the weakneſs that is common to my ſex; God may abandon me: I feel that I have neither ſtrength nor courage long to bear up under what I have hitherto ſupported. Mr. Marquis, dread leſt the fatal moment arrives when you ſhall weep over my deſtiny, when you ſhall be harrowed with remorſe. I ſhall not return from the abyſs into which I ſhall have fallen, and which will be for ever ſhut upon me.

Retire, ſaid the Archdeaeon to me. One of the eccleſiaſtics preſented his hand to raiſe me up, and the Archdeacon continued: I have heard you, I am now about to hear your Superior, and I will not leave this place till order is re-eſtabliſhed.... I withdrew. I found the reſt of the houſe in alarm; all the nuns were at the door of their cells, converſing acroſs the paſſage. As ſoon as I appeared, they retired, and their doors, which they ſhut with violence, one after another, reſounded loudly through the manſion. I entered my cell. I dropped upon my knees againſt the wall, and prayed God to conſider the moderation with which I had ſpoken to the Archdeacon, and to impreſs his mind with a conviction of my innocence, and of the truth.

I was

I was engaged in prayer, when the Archdeacon, his two companions, and the Superior, entered my cell. I have mentioned that I had neither prayer-deſk, tapeſtry, chairs, curtains, mattreſs, ſheets, utenſils, lock to my door, nor hardly a ſingle whole pain of glaſs in my windows. I roſe; and the Archdeacon, ſtopping ſhort and turning to the Superior, with eyes full ef indignation, ſaid: Well, now Madam?—She replied, I was ignorant of this. —You were ignorant of it! it is falſe; have you paſſed a ſingle day without viſiting this apartment? and do you not deſcend to your own chamber after you have been here? Siſter Suſan, ſpeak; was not Madam the Superior here to-day?—I made no anſwer, he did not urge me; but the young eccleſiaſtics, dropping their arms, with their heads reclined, and their eyes fixed upon the ground, diſcovered their ſurpriſe and their diſtreſs. They all went out together; and I heard the Archdeacon ſay to the Superior in the paſſage, You are unworthy of the office which you fill; you ought to be depoſed. All this diſorder muſt be repaired before I quit this houſe; and, ſhaking his head as he walked along he added, This is horrible—Chriſtians indeed! nuns! human beings! it is horrible!

After this, I heard no more of the ſubject; but I was ſupplied with linen, and other articles of dreſs; with curtains, ſheets, blankets, furniture; my breviary, my books of devotion, my roſary, my crucifix, were reſtored; my windows were repaired; in ſhort, I received every thing neceſſary to my accommodation, as other nuns. I was again admitted to the parlour, but only when my buſineſs required.

My ſuit proceeded with little ſucceſs. M. Manouri publiſhed his firſt memorial, which excited little

little intereſt. It contained too much wit, too little of the pathetic, and ſcarcely any argument. Yet the fault muſt not altogether be charged to this able lawyer. I abſolutely would not conſent that he ſhould attack the reputation of my parents; I required that he ſhould forbear to ſcandalize the religious order, and eſpecially the houſe in which I lived; I deſired that he would not repreſent my ſiſters and my brothers-in-law in too odious colours. In my favour I had only the firſt proteſtation I had made, a ſolemn one indeed, but taken in the firſt convent, and in no ſhape renewed ſince that period. When ſuch narrow limits are aſſigned to a defence, againſt thoſe who aſſume the utmoſt latitude of attack, who trample without diſtinction upon what is juſt and what is unjuſt, who aſſert and deny with the ſame impudence; who are deterred by no bluſh of ſhame in the imputations which they charge, the ſuſpicions they inſinuate, the ſlander and calumny which they invent; it is difficult to come off victorious in the conteſt, eſpecially before courts, where the habits of buſineſs, and the irkſomneſs which practice is apt to produce, almoſt always preclude a ſcrupulous examination, even in matters of the higheſt importance; where diſputes like mine too are always regarded with an unfavourable eye by the politician, who dreads that upon the ſucceſs of one nun reclaiming againſt her vows, an infinite number of others might be induced to proſecute a ſimilar meaſure. They are conſcious of a ſecret feeling, that if the priſon doors were allowed to be thrown open, to reſtore an unfortunate inhabitant to liberty, the crowd would be ſtimulated by the precedent to attempt to burſt them aſunder by force. The prevailing policy is, to diſcourage ſimilar proceedings, and, by the difficulty of a change in our ſituation, to induce us to be reſigned to our

fate. It appears to me, however, that in a well-regulated ſtate, a courſe directly the reverſe ought to be followed; the religious life ought to be rendered difficult to enter, and eaſy to abandon. And why ought not this caſe to be placed on the ſame footing with ſo many others, where the ſmalleſt defect of formality invalidates the proceedings, though in other reſpects juſt? Are convents then ſo eſſential to the conſtitution of a ſtate? Did Jeſus Chriſt inſtitute the orders of monks and nuns? Is it abſolutely impoſſible for the church to diſpenſe with theſe appendages? What need has the bridegroom of ſo many fooliſh virgins, and the human ſpecies of ſo many victims? Will the neceſſity never be felt of narrowing the mouth of thoſe abyſſes, into which future races of mankind are about to plunge and be deſtroyed? Are all the hackneyed rounds of devotion performed within their walls worth a ſingle farthing which pity beſtows upon the poor? Does God, who created man a ſocial being, approve his ſecluſion? Can God, who formed him frail and inconſtant, authorize the temerity of his vows? Can theſe vows which outrage the general propenſity of nature, be even well obſerved except by a few ill-conſtructed beings, in whom the germs of the paſſions are injured, and who properly ſhould be referred to the claſs of monſters, if our knowledge permitted us to diſcern with equal facility the internal ſtructure of man, as to preſerve his outward form? Are all thoſe gloomy ceremonies that are obſerved on t he taking of the habit, and at the time of profeſſion, when a man or a woman is devoted to the monaſtic life, and to miſery—have they the power of ſuſpending the animal functions? On the contrary, do they no awake amid ſilence, conſtraint and ſloth, with a violence unknown to thoſe who

live

live in the world, whoſe attention is varied and occupied by the number of objects which occur? Where is it that we behold the imagination haunted by impure phantoms, which purſue and agitate the mind? Where is it that we diſcover that profound diſcontent, that pallid look, that meagre countenance, thoſe ſymptoms of waſting, declining nature? Where do you obſerve nights conſumed in groans, days ſpent in melancholy, for which no cauſe can be aſſigned, followed by tears for which no reaſon can be found? Where does it occur, that nature, outraged by a conſtraint for which ſhe is not formed, breaks down every obſtacle by which ſhe is oppoſed, becomes furious, and throws the animal economy into a diſorder for which no remedy can be found? In what place have peeviſhneſs and diſcontent eraſed every ſocial quality? In what ſociety is it that there exiſts none of the endearing relations of father, brother, ſiſter, parent, friend? In what ſituation is it that man, conſidering himſelf only a being that appears for a moment and paſſes on, treats the ſweeteſt ties by which mortals are united, as a traveller views the objects that fall in his way—without intereſt, without attachment? Where is the region which hatred, and ſpleen, and vapours inhabit? Where do you meet with animoſity that is never extinguiſhed? Where do the paſſions brood in ſilence? Where do you place the abode of cruelty, and of curioſity? The hiſtory of theſe aſylums is unknown, ſaid M. Manouri, in his *Plaidoyer*, it is unknown.

A young lady aſked permiſſion of her parents to enter into the order of Urſulines. Her father ſaid that he would conſent, but that he gave her three years to conſider of it. This condition appeared ſevere to a young perſon full of fervour; neverthe-

leſs, it was neceſſary to ſubmit. This period elapſed; and her call not being proved to be fallacious, ſhe returned to her father, and told him that the three years had expired. Very well, my child, replied he, I allowed you a trial of three years; I hope you will be ſo good as to allow me as many to form my reſolution.... This conduct appeared ſtill much more ſevere, tears were ſhed upon the occaſion; but the father was a man of firmneſs, who perſevered in his purpoſe. At the end of theſe ſix years ſhe entered and made profeſſion. She was a good nun; ſimple, pious, exact in all her duties; but it happened that the directors abuſed her frankneſs, to obtain information of what paſſed in the houſe. Her Superiors ſuſpected the truth. She was confined and deprived of religious exerciſes, in conſequence of which ſhe became mad. And how is it poſſible that any mind could withſtand the perſecutions of fifty perſons, buſy from morning till night in tormenting you? They had previouſly ſpread a ſnare for the girl's mother, which ſtrikingly diſplays the avarice of the Superiors. They were at pains to inſpire the mother of this recluſe, with the deſire of entering the houſe, and viſiting the cell of her daughter. She applied to the Grand Vicars, who granted her the favour ſhe ſolicited. She entered, and flew to the cell of her daughter; but what was her aſtoniſhment, to ſee nothing but four bare walls! Every thing had been carried away. They had ſuſpected that this tender and feeling mother would not allow her daughter to live in this ſituation; and in reality ſhe furniſhed it anew, ſupplied her with a ſtock of clothes and linen, proteſting ſeriouſly to the nuns, that this curioſity coſt her too dear to be repeated a ſecond time; and that three or four viſits a year like this, would ruin her brothers

brothers and ſiſters....It is in theſe receptacles that ambition and pride ſacrifice a part of a family to improve the fortunes of the reſt: theſe are the common ſewers into which the refuſe of ſociety are thrown. How many mothers are there like mine, who expiate a ſacret crime by the commiſſion of another!

M. Manouri publiſhed a ſecond memorial, which produced a little more effect. The ſuit was proſecuted vigorouſly. I again propoſed to my ſiſters to leave them the entire and peaceable poſſeſſion of the ſucceſſion of my parents. There was one time at which my ſuit took the moſt favourable turn, and when I entertained hopes of regaining my liberty. This glimpſe of good fortune ſerved, however, only the more cruelly to deceive me. My cauſe was pleaded at a public hearing, and loſt. The whole community was appriſed of the event, while I remained ignorant of it. What agitation, what tumult, what joy were diſplayed! Little ſecret clubs were held; they went backwards and forwards to the Superior's apartment, and the nuns to each other's cells. I trembled all over; I could neither leave my cell nor remain in it. I had no friend into whoſe arms I could run and throw myſelf. O what a cruel morning is that, when an important ſuit is to be decided! I wiſhed to pray, but could not; I knelt down, I collected my thoughts, and began to repeat an oriſon; but in a moment my mind was tranſported, in ſpite of myſelf, to the Court. I ſaw the Judges, I heard the advocates, I addreſſed myſelf to them; I interrupted my own counſel, and thought my cauſe poorly defended. I knew none of the Judges; yet I figured to myſelf images of them, of every character, ſome favourable, others hoſtile, a third party indifferent. I was in

an agitation, in a flutter of ideas which it is impoſſible to conceive.—The noiſe I had heard was ſucceeded by a profound ſilence. The talk among the nuns ceaſed. I thought that in the choir their voices were unuſually low, at leaſt thoſe who ſung; ſome of them did not ſing at all. When ſervice was over, they retired in ſilence. I imagined that they were as much diſquieted by the expectation of the event as I was; but about mid-day the noiſe and buſtle ſuddenly revived on every ſide. I heard doors open and ſhut, nuns going backwards and forwards, and the hollow murmurs of perſons whiſpering. I applied my ear to the key-hole; but it ſeemed to me that they were ſilent, and, as they paſſed, walked upon tiptoe. I conceived a preſentiment that I had loſt my cauſe. I no longer doubted it a moment. I paced round my cell without ſaying a word, my voice was ſtifled; I was unable to utter a complaint; I raiſed my hands to heaven. I leant ſometimes upon one ſide of the wall, ſometimes upon the other. I attempted to repoſe upon my bed, but was prevented by the violent beating of my heart; and certain it is, that I heard it beat, and that it even raiſed my clothes. I was in this ſituation when I received a meſſage, that a perſon wiſhed to ſee me. I went down ſtairs. I durſt not advance. She who delivered me the meſſage was ſo gay, that I thought the news I had to receive muſt neceſſarily be very ſad; however I went. When I reached the parlour-door, I ſtopped ſhort, and threw myſelf into a corner between two walls. I was unable to ſupport myſelf, yet I entered. Nobody was there—I waited. The perſon who called for me was prevented from appearing till I arrived. They ſuſpected very ſtrongly that he was a meſſenger from my advocate, they wiſhed therefore to know what

paſſed

paſſed between us, and they aſſembled to liſten. When he made his appearance, I was ſitting with my head reclining upon my arm, and leaning upon the bars of the grate.—I come from M. Manouri, ſaid he.—To inform me, replied I, that I have loſt my cauſe?—I don't know any thing of that, Madam; but he gave me this letter. He ſeemed grieved when he gave it me, and I have come here full ſpeed, as he deſired.—Give it me....—He preſented the letter, which I took without ſtirring; and without looking at him, I put it upon my knees, and continued in my former poſture. The man, however, aſked me, Is there no anſwer?—No, ſaid I, go....He went away, and I continued ſtill in the ſame poſture, unable either to move, or to ſummon reſolution to leave the place.

It is a rule in the convent, that you can neither write, nor receive letters, without the Superior's permiſſion; and thoſe you write, as well as thoſe you receive, are ſubmitted to her inſpection. I was therefore obliged to carry her mine. For this purpoſe, I roſe and proceeded to her apartment, I thought I ſhould never have reached it; a priſoner who leaves his dungeon to hear his ſentence of condemnation pronounced, could not have walked either more ſlowly or more dejectedly. At length I arrived at her door. The nuns ſurveyed me at a diſtance, they were unwilling to loſe the ſmalleſt circumſtance of the ſpectacle of my ſorrow, and my humiliation. I knocked at the door, which was opened. The Superior was within, along with ſome other nuns. This I perceived by the ſkirts of their robes, for I never had courage to raiſe my eyes. I preſented my letter with a trembling hand. She took it from me, read it, and again put it into my hands. I returned to my cell, threw myſelf on the bed, the letter beſide

me; where I remained without reading it, without riſing to go to dinner, without ſtirring till the afternoon ſervice. At half paſt three the clock warned me to go down. Some nuns had already aſſembled: the Superior was at the entrance of the choir; ſhe ſtopped me, and commanded me to kneel behind the door upon the outſide; the reſt of the community arrived, and the door was ſhut. After ſervice, they all went out; I allowed them to paſs me, then roſe, and followed laſt in the train. From this moment I began to condemn myſelf to endure whatever they were pleaſed to inflict. I was diſcharged from appearing at church, and I voluntarily forbore going to the hall, or to enjoy recreation. I viewed my ſituation in every way, and I diſcovered no reſource but in ſubmiſſion, and in the neceſſity which they felt of employing my talents. I ſhould have been contented with that kind of oblivion, in which for ſeveral days they allowed me to remain. The viſits of different perſons were announced; but that of M. Manouri was the only one which I was permitted to receive. When I entered the parlour, I found him preciſely in the ſituation in which I was when his meſſenger was introduced to me; his head reclining upon his hands, and leaning upon the grate. I recogniſed him, but ſaid nothing. He was afraid either to look at me or to ſpeak. Madam, ſaid he at laſt, without changing his poſture, I wrote to you; did you receive my letter?—I received it, but have not read it.—You don't know then....—I know all, I conjectured what was my fate, and I have met it with reſignation.—How are you treated?—They have not yet begun to think of me, but I learn from the paſt, what I muſt expect in future. I have only one conſolation, that deprived of the hope by which I was ſupported, it is impoſſible for me

me to endure ſo much as I have already ſuffered; death will put a period to my misfortunes. The fault which I have committed, is one which in religious houſes is never forgiven. I do not aſk of God to ſoften the hearts of thoſe, to whoſe diſcretion he has been pleaſed to abandon me, but I implore him to grant me ſtrength to enable me to ſupport my ſufferings, to ſave me from deſpair, and ſpeedily to call me to himſelf.—Madam, ſaid he, weeping, had you been my own ſiſter, I could have done no more....This man's heart overflows with ſenſibility. Madam, continued he, if in any reſpect it is in my power to be uſeful to you, command my ſervice. I ſhall viſit the chief preſident, whoſe good opinion I enjoy; I ſhall likewiſe wait upon the Grand Vicars and the Archbiſhop.—Sir, do not give yourſelf the trouble to ſpeak to any one upon the ſubject; it is all over.—But if it were poſſible to obtain permiſſion for you to change your houſe?—It is attended with too many obſtacles.—But, pray what then are theſe obſtacles?—The difficulty of obtaining permiſſion, the neceſſity of depoſiting a new dowry, or of withdrawing the former one from this houſe; and, beſides, what ſhould I find in another convent? that inflexibility which characteriſes my heart, would ſtill accompany me. I ſhould meet with Superiors equally pitileſs, and nuns equally unkind, as here. I ſhould have the ſame duties to perform, and the ſame ſufferings to endure. It is better that I ſhould end my days in this place; at leaſt the period of my miſery will be leſs tedious.—Madam, you have intereſted in your favour many worthy perſons, moſt of whom are opulent; here your departure will not be oppoſed, if you carry nothing along with you.—I believe ſo.—The death, or the departure of a nun, conduces to the intereſt of

thoſe who remain.—But thoſe people of worth, thoſe opulent people you mention, think no more of me, and you will find them very cold, when you propoſe to furniſh me with a dowry at their expence. Why do you imagine that people of the world are more ready to contribute to reſcue from the cloiſter a nun who has no call for the religious life, than pious perſons are to introduce into the convent thoſe who are really called to embrace that ſituation? Do the latter eaſily procure a dowry? Alas, Sir, I am forſaken by all the world ſince the loſs of my ſuit; I now ſee nobody.—Only commit that affair to me, Madam, and I ſhall be moſt happy.—I aſk nothing, I entertain no hopes, I give no oppoſition to any thing you judge proper; the only ſpring I had left is now broken. Could I only promiſe myſelf that God would produce a change in my heart, and that the qualities of the religious ſtate would ſucceed to the hope of quitting it, which I have now loſt.....but that is impoſſible; this dreſs I wear has attached itſelf to my ſkin, to my bones, and yet only ſits the more uneaſy upon me. Ah! what a fate is mine! to be compelled for ever to be a nun, and to feel conſcious that I muſt ever remain unfit for that ſtate! to paſs my whole life in beating my head againſt the gratings of my priſon!.....Here I began to cry aloud; I endeavoured, but in vain, to ſuppreſs my voice. M. Manouri, ſurpriſed at this appearance, ſaid: Madam, may I venture to aſk you a queſtion?—You may, Sir.—Muſt not grief ſo violent be excited by ſome ſecret motive?—No, Sir; I hate a life of ſolitude; I feel that I deteſt it; I am conſcious that I ſhall deteſt it as long as I live. I cannot ſubmit to all the miſeries which fill up the day of a recluſe; it is a tiſſue of puerilities which I deſpiſe. I would have accommodated myſelf to them,

them, could my exertions have ſucceeded. An hundred times have I endeavoured to impoſe upon my underſtanding, to overcome my repugnance, but in vain. I have envied, I have implored God to grant me, that happy imbecility of mind which my companions poſſeſſed; but I have not obtained it, and he will never be pleaſed to beſtow it upon me. Every action I perform is wrong, every expreſſion I utter is amiſs; the defect of my vocation penetrates to every part of my conduct, and it does not paſs without obſervation. Every moment I inſult the monaſtic life; my incapacity is called pride: it is the employment of thoſe with whom I live to expoſe me to humiliation; faults and puniſhments multiply to infinity; and I ſpend every day in meaſuring with my eye the height of the walls.—Madam, it is not in my power to level them with the ground, but I can do ſomething elſe. —Sir, do not make any attempt.—You muſt change your houſe; it ſhall be my buſineſs to enable you to put it in execution. I ſhall return and pay you another viſit; I hope I ſhall have acceſs to you; you ſhall hear of me without delay. Be aſſured, that if you agree to the attempt, I will ſucceed in effecting your liberation from this place. If you are treated here with extraordinary ſeverity, do not fail to give me information.

It was late when M. Manouri went away. I returned to my cell. Almoſt immediately we were ſummoned, by the bell, to evening ſervice, and I was among the firſt who appeared. I allowed the nuns to paſs me, and I took it for granted, that I was to remain at the door; and accordingly it was ſhut againſt me by the Superior. At ſupper, as ſhe entered, ſhe made me a ſign to ſit down upon the ground, in the middle of the refectory. I obeyed, and was only ſerved with bread and water.

I ate

I ate a little, while I bedewed my portion with my tears. Next day a council was held, and all the members of the community were assembled to hear my sentence. I was condemned to be deprived of recreation; to attend service, for a whole month, at the door of the choir; to receive my food, sitting upon the ground, in the middle of the refectory; to undergo some ignominious punishment three days successively; to renew the assumption of the habit; and to repeat my vows; to use the hair-cloth; to fast during two days; and to macerate myself every Friday after the evening service. I was placed upon my knees, with my veil dropped, while this sentence was pronounced.

Next morning the Superior came to my cell, accompanied by a nun carrying upon her arm a hair-cloth, and that robe of coarse stuff in which I was dressed when I was conducted to the dungeon. I perfectly understood the meaning of these preparations; I undressed myself, or rather they tore off my veil, stripped me of my clothes, and gave me the robe I have mentioned. My head was uncovered, my feet were bare, my long hair flowed over my shoulders, and my whole garb consisted of the hair-cloth, a very coarse shift, and the long robe which fastened round my neck and descended to my feet. In this situation I remained the whole day, and appeared at all the exercises we had to perform.

In the evening, when I had retired to my cell, I heard the sound of people approaching, chanting the litanies. The procession was composed of all the members of the house, ranged in two lines. They entered, and I appeared; they put a cord round my neck, a torch in one hand, and a scourge in the other. One of the nuns took the end of the cord, and led me between the two ranks, and

the

the proceſſion moved on towards a ſmall private oratory, conſecrated to the holy Virgin. They came to my cell, chanting in a ſolemn voice, and they returned in ſilence. When I reached this little oratory, which was lighted up with two candles, I received orders to aſk pardon of God, and of the community, for the ſcandal I had occaſioned. The nun by whom I was conducted, told me in whiſpers what I was to ſay, and I repeated it word for word. After this, they took the cord from my neck, they ſtripped me to the middle, they threw my hair, which flowed over my ſhoulders, to one ſide, the ſcourge which I carried in my left hand was put into my right, and they began the *Miſerere*. I underſtood what they expected me to do, and it was performed. The *Miſerere* being concluded, I received a ſhort exhortation from the Superior; the lights were extinguiſhed, the nuns withdrew, and I again dreſſed myſelf.

When I returned to my cell, I felt violent pains in my feet; I examined them, and found them covered with blood, from the wounds they had ſuſtained from pieces of broken glaſs which the nuns had been ſo malicious as to ſcatter in my way.

I underwent this ignominious puniſhment, in the ſame manner, the two following days; only on the laſt a pſalm was added to the *Miſerere*.

Upon the fourth day, my habit of a nun was reſtored to me, with almoſt the ſame ceremony which is practiſed at this ſolemnity when it is public.

Upon the fifth, I renewed my vows. In the courſe of a month I went through the reſt of the penance which had been impoſed upon me; after which, by degrees, I returned to the ordinary ſtate

which

which prevailed in the community. I reſumed my place in the choir, and in the refectory; and I diſcharged, in my turn, the various functions of the houſe. But how great was my ſupriſe, when I obſerved my young friend, who had ſo kindly intereſted herſelf in my fortune! She appeared to be almoſt as much altered as myſelf. She was frightfully extenuated, her countenance was pale as death, her lips were white, and her eyes almoſt ſunk. Siſter Urſula, ſaid I to her in a whiſper, what is the matter with you? What is the matter, replied ſhe, I am attached to you, and yet you can aſk me ſuch a queſtion! It was full time that a period ſhould be put to your ſufferings; had they continued longer, death muſt have proved the miſery which I felt.

To her care was I indebted for the wounds my feet had eſcaped upon the two laſt days of my penance. She had the kindneſs privately to ſweep the paſſages, and to remove the pieces of glaſs which were ſcattered in the way. On the days when I was condemned to live on bread and water, ſhe deprived herſelf of a part of her allowance, which ſhe wrapt up in a clean cloth, and threw into my cell. The nun who was to lead me by the cord, was choſen by lot, and the lot fell upon her. She had the firmneſs to call upon the Superior, and proteſt to her, that ſhe would ſooner die than undertake this infamous and cruel office. Fortunately, this young lady's family was of conſiderable rank, and ſhe enjoyed a large annuity, which ſhe employed in a manner that pleaſed the Superior; and, for a few pounds of ſugar and coffee, ſhe found a nun to take her place. I will not be ſo preſumptuous as to imagine, that the ſignal diſpleaſure of God was diſplayed againſt the baſe creature who undertook the taſk, in the misfortune under

under which ſhe has fallen. She has become mad, and is confined; but the Superior lives, governs, torments, and enjoys perfect health.

It was impoſſible that my conſtitution could reſiſt trials ſo rude and ſo lengthened; I fell ſick. In this critical ſituation it was that ſiſter Urſula really teſtified the ſincerity of the friendſhip ſhe had conceived for me; ſhe ſaved my life. As ſhe herſelf would ſometimes tell me, what ſhe had thus preſerved could not be deemed a bleſſing; yet there was no kind of ſervice which I did not experience from her attention, on thoſe days when it was her turn to preſide in the infirmary. Neither was I neglected at other times, thanks to the intereſt ſhe took in my welfare, and to the rewards which ſhe diſtributed among thoſe who nurſed me, in proportion as they gave me ſatisfaction. She aſked permiſſion to watch me during the night; and the Superior refuſed her requeſt, under pretext that ſhe was too delicate to ſupport the fatigue. This refuſal ſhe conſidered as a moſt afflicting diſappointment. All the attentions ſhe beſtowed, however, could not check the progreſs of my diſtemper; I was reduced to the utmoſt extremity, and received the laſt ſacraments. A few moments before they were adminiſtered, I requeſted to ſee all the members of the community aſſembled, and the favour was granted. The nuns ſtood round my bed, and the Superior in the middle of them. My young friend ſat at my pillow, and held my hand, which ſhe bedewed with her tears. They conjectured that I had ſomething to ſay; they raiſed me up, and ſupported me in an erect poſture, by the aſſiſtance of two pillows. Then addreſſing myſelf to the Superior, I entreated her benediction, and that ſhe would forget the faults I had committed; of all my companions I aſked pardon for the ſcandal my conduct

conduct had occaſioned. I had ſent for an infinite number of toys, which either formed the ornaments of my cell, or were reſerved for my particular uſe, and I entreated the Superior's permiſſion to diſpoſe of them; ſhe conſented, and I beſtowed them upon the nuns who had acted as her attendants when I was thrown into the dungeon. I deſired her who had led me by the cord on the day of my penance, to approach, and embracing her, while I preſented her with my roſary and crucifix, I ſaid: Dear ſiſter, remember me in your prayers, and be aſſured that I will not forget you before God.... And why did not the Supreme Being call me away at this moment? I would have gone to him without diſquietude; and what a bleſſing is ſuch a ſtate of mind! Who can promiſe that he will poſſeſs it a ſecond time? This trying occaſion, however, muſt again return. May God then renew my ſufferings, and let this ſolemn hour be as tranquil as that which I experienced! I ſaw the heavens opened, and doubtleſs they were, for then conſcience no longer deceives, and mine gave me promiſe of eternal felicity.

After receiving the ſacrament I fell into a kind of lethargy; all this night I was given over. From time to time they came and felt my pulſe; I was ſenſible of the touch of hands groping over my face, and I heard, ſeemingly, diſtant voices, ſaying: it increaſes.... Her noſe is cold.... She will not ſurvive an hour..... The roſary and the crucifix will be yours..... While another, in a tone of reſentment, ſaid: Retire, retire, allow her to die in peace; have you not already tormented her enough? How delightful were my ſenſations upon recovering from this criſis, and again opening my eyes, to find myſelf in the arms of my friend! She had never left me; ſhe had paſſed the night in adminiſtering me

me aſſiſtance, in repeating the prayers for perſons in their laſt agonies, in making me kiſs the crucifix, and applying it to her own lips after withdrawing it from mine. When ſhe ſaw my eyes roll, and heard me breathe a profound ſigh, ſhe imagined that it was my laſt, and calling me her friend, uttered doleful cries, ſaying, My God, have compaſſion upon her, and upon me! My God, receive her ſpirit!—Beloved friend, when you are before the throne of God, remember Siſter Urſula!.... I looked on her ſadly ſmiling, and dropped a tear as I preſſed her hand. At this moment M. Bouvard arrived. This was the phyſician of the houſe, reputed a man of ability, but deſpotic, haughty, and ſevere. He tore my friend from me with violence, he felt my pulſe and my ſkin; he was accompanied by the Superior and her favourites. After a few ſhort queſtions with regard to what had taken place, he anſwered, She will recover.... and turning to the Superior, who derived no pleaſure from this obſervation, Yes, Madam, ſaid he, ſhe will recover, her ſkin is favourable, the fever has abated, life begins to dawn anew in her eyes..... At every word of this, joy beamed on the countenance of my friend, while on the features of the Superior and her companions was diſplayed a diſappointment and chagrin which I cannot deſcribe, and which their conſtraint was ill able to diſſemble. Sir, ſaid I, I no longer deſire to live.... So much the worſe, replied he; and after giving certain orders, he departed. I was told, that during my lethargy I frequently repeated, Dear mother, you then beckon me to you! I am coming to join you! I will tell you all.... It was my old Superior whom probably I thus addreſſed; I have no doubt of it. I gave her picture to no one, but deſired to carry it along with me to the grave,

The

The prognoſtic of M. Bouvard was fulfilled; the fever ſubſided; it was carried off by copious perſpirations, and no doubt was now entertained of my cure: I did indeed recover, but the period of my convaleſcence was very tedious. It was decreed that I ſhould endure, in this houſe, all the ſufferings it is poſſible to experience. My diſtemper was in its nature malignant; and Siſter Urſula had hardly ever left me a moment. As I began to regain my ſtrength, hers declined; her ſtomach was deranged; in the afternoons ſhe was attacked by fainting fits, which ſometimes laſted a quarter of an hour: in this ſituation ſhe appeared as dead; her eyes ſunk; a cold ſweat covered her brow, and, collecting in drops, flowed down her cheeks; her arms hung motionleſs at her ſide. The only way in which ſhe received any benefit, was by unlacing her ſtays, and untying her clothes. When ſhe recovered from the ſwoon, her firſt impulſe was to look for me at her ſide, and there ſhe always found me; ſometimes, even when ſhe retained a certain portion of ſenſe and conſciouſneſs, ſhe would ſtretch her hands round, without opening her eyes. The object of this action was ſo well known, that ſome nuns preſenting themſelves to her hand thus groping round, and not being diſcovered, becauſe ſhe then happened to relapſe without motion, would ſay to me: Siſter Suſan, it is you ſhe wiſhes, come here then.... I would place myſelf at her feet, lay her hand upon my forehead, and there it remained till her ſwoon ſubſided. When it was over, ſhe would ſay to me: Ah, Siſter Suſan, it is I who am to go away, and you who are to remain behind; it is I who am firſt to ſee her again; I will ſpeak to her of you, and ſhe will weep when ſhe hears your ſad ſtory; if they ſtill love in Heaven, ſurely it is no crime to weep. If tears ſometimes are bitter,

they

they are ſometimes too delightfully ſweet.... Then ſhe reclined her head upon my neck, wept profuſely, and added: Adieu, Siſter Suſan; adieu, my friend, who will ſhare your ſufferings when I am no more? Who?... Oh! my deareſt friend, how I lament you! I am about to leave you, I feel that I am. If you were happy, how deeply ſhould I regret to die.!

I was extremely alarmed at her ſituation. I ſpoke to the Superior. I propoſed that ſhe ſhould be taken to the infirmary; that ſhe ſhould be exempted from attending at ſervice, and from performing any of the laborious exerciſes of the houſe, and that a phyſician ſhould be called. But I only received for anſwer that her complaint was nothing ſerious, that the fainting fits, to which ſhe was ſubject, would go away of themſelves; and Siſter Urſula was perfectly contented to diſcharge her uſual duties, and to follow her ordinary courſe of life. One day, after matins, at which ſhe had been preſent, ſhe did appear again as uſual; I conceived that ſhe muſt be very ill. When morning ſervices were over, I flew to her apartment, found her lying upon the bed, dreſſed. When I entered, ſhe ſaid to me; Are you there, my dear friend? I feared greatly that you would be long in coming, and I expected you. With what impatience did I long to ſee you! My ſwoon was ſo ſevere, and ſo long, that I believed it was to continue for ever, and that I was never to ſee you more. Hold, there is the key of my oratory, open the drawers, raiſe a little board, which ſeparates the drawer from below upwards, into two parts: behind this board you will find a packet of papers. I have never been able to ſummon ſufficient reſolution to part with them, in ſpite of the danger which keeping them occaſioned; and, notwithſtanding the

the grief with which the perusal of them was attended (alas! they are almost obliterated by my tears), when I am no more, commit them to the flames..... She was so feeble, and so oppressed, that she was unable to pronounce together two words of this address. She hesitated between every syllable, and spoke so low too, that, although my ear was close to her mouth, I had the utmost difficulty in hearing what she said. I took the key, pointed with my finger to the oratory, and she made signs that I was right. Feeling now a presentiment that I was about to lose her, and persuaded that her malady was a consequence of mine, or occasioned by the fatigue she had undergone, or by the attention she had bestowed, I burst into a flood of tears, and yielded to the emotions of the most violent affliction; I kissed her forehead, her eyes, her face, her hands; I asked her forgiveness. Meanwhile she appeared totally absent; she did not hear me; and one of her hands, moving gently backwards and forwards, stroaked my face. I believe that she no longer saw me; perhaps, even she imagined that I had gone away, for she called, Sister Susan?—I said, Here I am.—What o'clock is it?—It is half past eleven —Half past eleven! Go to dinner, go; you will return immediately..... The bell rang for dinner, and I was obliged to quit her. When I had reached the door she called me back, and I returned. She made an effort to present me her face, I kissed it; she took my hand, and kept it fast locked in hers. She seemed unwilling, even unable, to leave me; It must be, however, said she, as she let me go, it is the will of God; adieu, Sister Susan, adieu. Give me my crucifix..... I put it into her hand and went away.

When we were about to rise from table, I addressed myself to the Superior; I spoke to her, in presence

preſence of all the nuns, of the danger of Siſter Urſula, and preſſed her to judge of her ſituation in perſon. Very well, ſaid ſhe, we muſt ſee her. She went up ſtairs, accompanied by ſome others, and I followed. They entered her cell; poor Siſter Urſula was no more; ſhe was ſtretched upon her bed with her clothes on, her head reclining upon the pillow, her mouth and eyes ſhut, and the crucifix in her hand. The Superior coolly gazed upon her, and ſaid: She is dead. Who could have imagined that ſhe was ſo near her end? She was an excellent girl; let the bell toll her knell, and let her be buried.

I remained alone by her pillow. It is impoſſible for me to paint my ſorrow, yet I envied her fate. I ſat down beſide her, I bathed her with my tears, I kiſſed her again and again, and ſpread the ſheet over her face, the features of which now began to change. I then bethought me of executing the commiſſion with which ſhe had entruſted me. To prevent interruption in the diſcharge of this taſk, I waited till all the members of the houſe were employed at ſervice. I opened the oratary, removed the board, and found a pretty large bundle of papers. which I burnt that very night. This young lady had always diſcovered a melancholy turn, and I do not recollect ever to have ſeen her ſmile, except once during her illneſs.

I was now left alone in the houſe, indeed in the world, for I now knew no human being that was intereſted in my fortune. I had heard no more of my advocate M. Manouri. I preſumed, either that he was diſcouraged by the difficulties which he had to encounter, or that, diſtracted by amuſement or buſineſs, the offers of ſervice which he made me had eſcaped his recollection; nor did the ſuppoſition inſpire me with any reſentment. My

mind

mind naturally leans to indulgence; I can pardon any thing in mankind but injuſtice, ingratitude, and inhumanity. I therefore excuſed M. Manouri as much as I could, and all the people of faſhion who had diſplayed ſo much alacrity in the courſe of my law-ſuit, and in whoſe memory I no longer exiſted; and among others, even you yourſelf, the Marquis of Croiſmare. Such was my ſtate of mind when our eccleſiaſtical Superiors paid a viſit to the houſe.

They enter, they traverſe the cells, they queſtion the nuns, they require an account both of the temporal and ſpiritual adminiſtration; and, according to the temper which they bring along with them to the diſcharge of this duty, they repair, or they increaſe the diſorder. I now had an opportunity of again meeting the honeſt and rigid M. Hebert, with his two young and compaſſionate attendants. They ſeemed to recollect the deplorable ſtate in which I had formerly appeared before them; their eyes gliſtened with tears, and I remarked the expreſſions of ſympathy and joy upon their countenances. M. Hebert ſat down, and placed me oppoſite to him. His two companions ſtood behind his chair, and their looks were fixed upon me. Siſter Suſan, ſaid M. Hebert, pray how are you treated now?—I replied, Sir, I am forgotten.—So much the better.—And this is the utmoſt extent of my wiſhes; but I have an important favour to requeſt of you, and that is to invite hither the mother Superior.—And why?—Becauſe if any complaint happens to be made againſt her, ſhe will not fail to aſcribe it to me.—I underſtand; but ſtill inform me of all you know concerning her.—Sir, I entreat you to call her, and that ſhe may hear both your queſtions and my anſwers,—Tell us, nevertheleſs. —Sir, you ſeem deſirous to ruin me.—No, entertain no apprehenſions of any kind. From this moment

moment ſhe has no authority over you; before the end of this week you will be transferred to Sainte Eutropa of Arpajon. You have a good friend.—A good friend, Sir! I don't know who that can be.—It is your advocate.—M. Manouri?—He himſelf.—I did not imagine that he ſtill kept me in remembrance.—He has waited upon your ſiſters, the Archbiſhop, the chief Preſident, and all who are remarkable for piety. He has lodged your dowry in the houſe I have mentioned, and you have now only a very ſhort time to remain here. Thus, if you know that any diſorder prevails, you may give me information of it, without expoſing yourſelf to any diſagreeable conſequence; and I even require you to do ſo by your holy obedience.—I know of none.—What! ſince the loſs of your ſuit, have they kept any meaſures at all with you?—They believed, and it was natural for them to believe, that I had been guilty of a fault in attempting to annul my vows, and I was obliged to aſk the forgiveneſs of God.—But it is the circumſtances of that proceeding which I wiſh to learn..... and ſaying this, he ſhook his head, knit his eye-brows, and I conceived that it was now in my power to conſign to the Superior a ſhare of the ſtripes and the diſcipline which ſhe had compelled me to undergo. This, however, was not my intention. The Archdeacon perceiving that he could obtain no ſatisfaction, left the room, with a recommendation of ſecrecy upon what he had told me of my tranſlation to Saint Eutropa of Arpajon. As good M. Hebert walked alone through the paſſage, his two companions returned, and paid their reſpects to me in a manner extremely tender and affectionate. I am ignorant who they are; but may God preſerve to them that feeling and compaſſionate character which is ſo rarely to be found in their ſituation, and

and which ſo well becomes the depoſitaries of the weakneſſes of mankind, and the interceſſors for the mercy of Heaven! I ſuppoſed that M. Hebert was employed in conſoling, examining, or rebuking ſome other nun, when he again entered my cell. By what means, ſaid he, did you become acquainted with M. Manouri?—In the courſe of my ſuit?—By whom was he recommended to you for the conduct of it!—By the Preſident's lady.—You muſt have had frequent conferences with him in the courſe of your buſineſs.—No, Sir; I ſaw him very ſeldom.—How did you communicate to him your inſtructions?—By ſome memorials, written with my own hand.—You have preſerved copies of theſe memorials?—No, Sir.—By whom were theſe memorials conveyed to him?—By the Preſident's lady.—And how were you introduced to her acquaintance?—By Siſter Urſula, my friend, and her relation.—You have ſeen M. Manouri ſince the loſs of your ſuit?—Once.—That is very ſeldom. You have never written to him?—No, Sir,—He will doubtleſs inform you of what he has done for you. I command you not to ſee him in the parlour, and if he writes to you, either directly or indirectly, to ſend me his letter without opening it; do you underſtand me? without opening it.—Yes, Sir; and I will obey you.—Whether the diſtruſt of M. Hebert pointed to me, or to my benefactor, I was hurt by it.

M. Manouri came to Longchamp that very evening. I kept my word to the Archdeacon, and refuſed to ſee him. Next day he wrote to me by his meſſenger; I received his letter, and ſent it unopened to M. Hebert. To the beſt of my recolleſtion, this happened upon Tueſday. I expected, with the utmoſt impatience, the reſult of the promiſe of the Archdeacon, and the exertions of M. Manouri.

M. Manouri. Wedneſday, Thurſday, Friday, paſſed without my hearing any thing upon the ſubject. How very tedious did theſe days appear to me! I trembled, leſt ſome obſtacle had occurred to derange the whole plan. I was not to recover my liberty, but I was to change my priſon; and that is ſomething. The firſt inſtance of good fortune inſpires in our minds the hope of a ſecond; and this, perhaps, is the origin of the proverb, *That good luck ſeldom comes ſingle.*

I was acquainted with the companions I was to quit, and I eaſily ſuppoſed that I ſhould gain ſomething by living among other priſoners. Be what they might, they neither could be more malicious nor worſe-intentioned. On Saturday morning, about nine o'clock, a great commotion aroſe in the houſe. A very trifling matter ſerves to throw the heads of nuns into a ferment. They went to and fro, they whiſpered; the doors of the dormitories opened aud ſhut inceſſantly. This, as you will have obſerved from what I have already ſaid, is the ſignal of monaſtic revolutions. I was alone in my cell. I waited in anxious ſuſpence; my heart beat; I liſtened at the door; I looked through my window; I roamed about, without being conſcious of what I did. Trembling with joy, I ſaid to myſelf, it is me they are coming to ſeek, in a moment I ſhall be here no longer..... and I was not miſtaken.

Two perſons I had never ſeen preſented themſelves to me. They were a nun, and the girl who kept the turning box at Arpajon. In a ſingle word they communicated to me the object of their viſit. I collected in a hurry the few things that belonged to me, and threw them careleſsly into the apron of the girl, who packed them up. I did not aſk permiſſion to ſee the Superior; Siſter Urſula was no

more; and I was therefore leaving nobody who cared for me, or whom I loved. I went down ſtairs; the doors were thrown open to me; after my packet was examined, I ſtepped into the coach, and away.

The Archdeacon and his two young eccleſiaſtics, the lady of the Preſident D***, and M. Manouri, were aſſembled in the Superior's apartment, when they were informed of my departure. On the road the nun acquainted me with every thing relative to the houſe; and, by way of chorus to every expreſſion which was uttered in its praiſe, the box girl added, It is the downright truth...She congratulated herſelf that the choice of coming for me had fallen upon her, and at the ſame time made a tender of her friendſhip. In conſequence of this, ſhe entruſted me with ſome ſecrets, and gave me ſome advice with regard to the conduct I ought to follow. Her advice was probably very proper for her ſituation, but it was not applicable to mine.—I don't know whether you have ever ſeen the convent of Arpajon. It is a large ſquare building, one of the ſides of which overlooks the highway, the other the fields and gardens. At each of the front windows there were one, two, or three nuns; and from this circumſtance I derived more knowledge of the order that prevailed in the houſe, than from all the nun and her companion had ſaid. It ſeemed that they knew the carriage in which we were, for in a twinkling all the veils diſappeared, and I arrived at the gate of my new priſon. The Superior came to meet me with open arms, embraced me, took my hand and led me into the hall which belonged to the community, where a few nuns had aſſembled before I entered, and to which others immediately flocked.

The

The name of this Superior was Madam ***. I cannot reſiſt the impulſe I feel to give you a deſcription of her before proceeding farther. She is a little woman, very plump, yet nimble and active in her motions. Her head never ſtands ſtill upon her ſhoulders a ſingle moment. There is always ſomething out of order in her dreſs. Her figure is neither good nor bad: her eyes, one of which, the right, is higher and larger than the other, are full of fire, mixed with ſomething of wildneſs. When ſhe walks, ſhe toſſes her arms backwards and forwards. When ſhe is going to ſpeak, ſhe opens her mouth before ſhe has arranged her ideas, and therefore ſtutters a little. When ſhe ſits, ſhe ſhifts about in her chair as if ſhe felt ſomething uneaſy. She is totally careleſs of decorum. She takes her handkerchief from her neck to rub her ſkin; ſhe croſſes her legs, aſks you a queſtion, and while you anſwer, pays no attention to what you ſay. She ſpeaks to you, and then bewilders herſelf; ſtops ſhort, and forgets where ſhe was; loſes her temper, and calls you aſs, brute, idiot, if you cannot lead her back to the ſubject. Sometimes ſhe is ſo familiar as to ſay *thee* and *thou*; ſometimes haughty and imperious, even to diſdain. Her moments of dignity are ſhort. She is alternately tender and ſevere. The diſcompoſure of her figure marks all the diſorder of her mind, and the inequality of her character. From this cauſe order and confuſion alternately ſucceeded each other in the houſe. Some days all diſtinction and order were confounded; boarders and novices, novices and nuns, were mingled together; they ran from chamber to chamber, or took tea, coffee, chocolate, liqueurs, with each other; or ſervice was hurried over with incredible celerity. In the midſt of this tumult the countenance of the Superior ſuddenly changes;

the bell rings; the nuns retire and ſhut themſelves in their apartments; the moſt profound ſilence ſucceeds to noiſe, ſhouting and tumult; and you would imagine that, all at once, Death had viſited every creature in the houſe. If a nun at ſuch a time is guilty of the ſlighteſt omiſſion, the Superior ſummons her to her cell, treats her with rigour, commands her to undreſs, and give herſelf twenty ſtripes with the ſcourge. The nun obeys, undreſſes herſelf, takes the ſcourge, and macerates herſelf. But no ſooner has ſhe beſtowed a few ſtripes, than the Superior, having reſumed her ſympathetic diſpoſition, ſnatches the inſtrument of penance, burſts into tears, laments her misfortune in being obliged to puniſh, kiſſes her forehead, her eyes, her mouth, her ſhoulders, loads her with careſſes and with praiſes: How ſoft and white is her ſkin! how plump ſhe is! what a lovely boſom! what beautiful ringlets!.... Siſter Saint Auguſtine, how fooliſh you are to be aſhamed! let go that neck-handkerchief, I am a woman, and your Superior; O! what a lovely boſom! how firm! and could I endure to ſee it torn by the laſh? No, No, that ſhall not be.—She then kiſſes her, raiſes her up, dreſſes her with her own hands, ſays to her the kindeſt things, diſpences with her attendance upon exerciſes, and ſends her back to her cell. It is extremely unpleaſant to be placed with women of this character. We cannot tell either what will pleaſe or diſpleaſe them, what we ought to do, and what we ought to avoid. Nothing is conducted after a regular ſyſtem. We are either ſupplied with profuſion, or ſtarved to death. The economy of the houſe is thrown into confuſion; remonſtrances either give offence or are neglected. We are either too near or too far removed from Superiors of this deſcription. Neither true diſtance nor proper meaſures

meaſures are obſerved. We paſs from diſgrace to favour, and from favour to diſgrace, without knowing why. If you pleaſe, I will give you a general example of her adminiſtration. Twice in the year ſhe uſed to run from cell to cell, and throw out at the window all the bottles of liqueur that were to be found; and four days after, ſhe herſelf would ſend preſents of them to moſt of the nuns. Such was the woman to whom I had taken the ſolemn vow of obedience; for our vows accompany us from one houſe to another.

I entered the hall along with her; ſhe led me, at the ſame time embracing me round the waiſt. A collation of fruits, biſcuits and confectionary, was preſented. The grave Archdeacon began my panegyric, which ſhe interrupted by, They were wrong, they were wrong; I know it.... The grave Archdeacon attempted to go on, and ſhe again interrupted him by, How could they poſſibly think of parting with her? She is ſweetneſs and modeſty itſelf; I am told ſhe poſſeſſes the fineſt talents.... The grave Archdeacon attempted to reſume his laſt words, but the Superior again interrupted him, by whiſpering in my ear, I am perfectly in love with you, and when theſe pedants are gone, I will call our ſiſters, and you will ſing us a little air, won't you?—I was ſeized with a violent inclination to laugh. The grave M. Hebert was a little diſconcerted; his two young companions ſmiled at his embarraſſment and mine. M. Hebert, however, reſuming his uſual character and manners, roughly ordered the Superior to ſit down and be ſilent. She ſat down, but ſhe was ill at eaſe; ſhe moved about on her chair, yawned, ſcratched her head, adjuſted her dreſs where it was not deranged, while the Archdeacon very methodically harangued upon the houſe I had quitted, the ill treatment I

had experienced, upon the houſe I had entered, and the obligations I owed to the perſons who had befriended me. At this place, I looked at M. Manouri, and he turned his eyes to the ground. The converſation then became more general; the painful ſilence impoſed upon the Superior ceaſed. I went up to M. Manouri, and thanked him for the ſervices he had done me. I trembled and ſtuttered, and knew not how to promiſe to teſtify my gratitude. My confuſion, my embarraſſment, my emotion (for I was really affected), mingled tears and joy; my whole conduct ſpoke to him more forcibly than words could have expreſſed. His anſwer was no better arranged than my addreſs, for his confuſion was not leſs than mine. I don't know exactly what he ſaid, but I underſtood him to mean, that he would be more than ſufficiently rewarded if he had contributed to ſoften the rigour of my fortune; that he would recollect what he had done with greater pleaſure than I could feel; that he was extremely ſorry that his buſineſs, which confined him to the Courts of Paris, would not allow him frequently to viſit the Convent of Arpajon; but he hoped for the permiſſion of the Archdeacon, and of the Superior, to enquire after my health and my ſituation. The Archdeacon did not hear, but the Superior anſwered, As much as you pleaſe, Sir; ſhe ſhall be at liberty to do whatever ſhe pleaſes; we ſhall endeavour to repair here the ſufferings which were elſewhere inflicted upon her .... And then ſhe added to me in a whiſper, So you then ſuffered a great deal, my child! But how could theſe creatures at Longchamp have the heart to uſe you ill? I was formerly acquainted with your Superior; we were boarders together at Port-Royal; ſhe was no better than her neighbours. We ſhall have an opportunity to ſee each other, and

you

you will inform me of the whole circumſtance.... Saying this, ſhe took one of my hands, which ſhe tapped gently with hers. The young eccleſiaſtics likewiſe paid me their compliments. It grew late, and M. Manouri took leave of us. The Archdeacon and his companions went to the houſe of M***, Lord of Arpajon, to which they had been invited, and I remained alone with the Superior; but we were not long left to ourſelves. All the nuns, all the novices, all the boarders, flocked, indiſcriminately, and in an inſtant I found myſelf ſurrounded by at leaſt a hundred perſons. I knew not which to liſten to, and which to anſwer. Among them were figures of every deſcription, and the remarks they made were of every ſort. I could perceive, however, that they were not diſſatisfied either with my anſwers or my perſon.

After this troubleſome conference had laſted ſome time, and the firſt ardour of curioſity was ſatisfied, the crowd decreaſed, the Superior diſmiſſed the reſt, and ſhe went in perſon to inſtal me in my cell. She performed the honours of it in her own way. She pointed out the oratory, and ſaid to me, Here my little friend will ſay her prayers; I will direct a cuſhion to be laid upon the ſtep, that her little knees may not be hurt. There is no holy water in the baſon! that Siſter Dorothy always forgets ſomething! Try that arm chair, and ſee how it fits you....Saying this, ſhe ſeated me, turned back my head, and kiſſed my forehead. She then went to the window, to ſee that the faſhes played eaſily; to the bed next, and drew and undrew the curtains, to ſee that they ſhut properly. She examined the blankets, they were good; ſhe took the bolſter, and ſtroking it up, ſaid, Dear little head will lie very well there. Theſe ſheets are not fine, but they are ſuch as are allowed to the

members of the community. The mattraſs is good....Having done this, ſhe came up, embraced, and took leave of me. During this ſcene, I ſaid to myſelf, O the fooliſh creature! and thought I might expect to ſpend both good and bad days.

I put all my things in order in my cell; I was preſent at evening ſervice, at ſupper, and at the recreation which followed. Some of the nuns accoſted me, I was ſhunned by others. The former were anxious to ſecure my protection with the Superior, the latter were alarmed at the predilection ſhe had already diſcovered in my favour. Theſe firſt moments paſſed in mutual compliments, in queſtions relative to the houſe I had quitted, in attempts to ſound my character, my inclinations, my underſtanding, my taſte. They employ every artifice to diſcover your temper and character. It is a train of little ambuſcades, into which they endeavour to draw you, and from which they form the moſt accurate concluſions. For inſtance, a word of ſcandal is introduced, and then they watch your looks with the ſtricteſt eye. They begin a ſtory, and they try whether you leave it with indifference, or expreſs a wiſh to hear the remainder. If you make a common remark, it is extolled as very fine, though they know that is nothing extraordinary. They praiſe or blame you, with a view to diſcover your diſpoſition. They endeavour to unveil your moſt ſecret thoughts. They aſk you queſtions concerning your reading. They offer you books, both ſacred and profane. The choice you make is remarked. They tempt you to commit ſome ſlight violation of the rules. They throw out to you oblique inſinuations againſt the Superior. Every thing is catched at and repeated. They quit you, and again join your company. They ſound your ſentiments upon manners, piety, the world, religion, the monaſtic life, upon every thing.

thing. From theſe reiterated experiments an epithet, deſcriptive of your character, is derived, and annexed to your name. Thus I was called Siſter Saint Suſan *the reſerved.*

The evening of my arrival I received a viſit from the Superior, who came to undreſs me.—She took off my veil and my neckerchief, put on my night-cap, and entirely undreſſed me herſelf.—She uttered innumerable compliments, and beſtowed upon me a thouſand careſſes, which a little embarraſſed me, I know not wherefore, for neither ſhe nor I meant any thing; even now that I reflect upon it, what meaning could we poſſibly have? I ſpoke of the ſubject to my director, who treated this familiarity which appeared to me, and ſtill appears, innocent, in a very ſerious light, and gravely prohibited me from ſubmitting to it any more. She kiſſed my neck, my ſhoulders, my arms, praiſed my ſhape and my ſize, and then put me into bed. She lifted up the bed clothes on both ſides, kiſſed my eyes, then drew the curtains and went away. I forgot to mention that, ſuppoſing I was fatigued, ſhe gave me permiſſion to lie in bed as long as I pleaſed.

I availed myſelf of this permiſſion, and this I believe is the only good night's repoſe I ever enjoyed in the cloiſter, and would have been ſo almoſt had I never left it. Next morning at nine o'clock, I heard a gentle knock at my door; I was ſtill in bed; I anſwered, and the perſon entered. It was a nun, who told me, with no ſmall ſhare of ill humour, that it was late, and the mother Superior wanted me. I roſe, dreſſed myſelf in haſte, and went down. Good morning, my child, ſaid ſhe; have you ſlept well? Here is ſome coffee, which has been kept for you an hour, I believe you will find it good; make haſte and take it, then we ſhall have ſome converſation....Saying this, ſhe

laid a cloth upon the table, and ſpread another upon my knee, poured out the coffee, and put in the ſugar. The reſt of the nuns were employed in the ſame manner, in each other's apartments. While I was at breakfaſt ſhe talked to me of my companions, painted them to me according to her feelings of averſion or favour, made me a thouſand proteſtations of friendſhip, aſked me innumerable queſtions concerning the houſe I had quitted, my parents, the grievances I had ſuffered, praiſed or blamed, as her fancy directed, and never heard any of my anſwers to an end. I never contradicted her. She was pleaſed with my underſtanding, my judgment, and my diſcretion. Meanwhile, in came one nun, then another, then a third, a fourth, and a fifth. They talked of the Superior's birds, ſhe of the Siſter's tricks, the others of all the little abſurdities of thoſe who were abſent. They began to be very merry. There was a ſpinet in one corner of the cell. From mere abſence of mind, I touched it with one of my fingers; for being but newly come to the houſe, and unacquainted with thoſe they made the ſubject of their mirth, the converſation afforded me little amuſement; and though I had been more converſant in the circumſtances, I ſhould not have been better entertained. It requires a great deal of wit to jeſt ſucceſsfully; and beſides, who is there exempted from one foible or other which is liable to ridicule? While they laughed, I ſtruck a few notes; by degrees I attracted their attention. The Superior came up to me, and giving me a gentle tap on the ſhoulder, Come, Saint Suſan, ſaid ſhe, amuſe us with your ſkill; play firſt, and then ſing. I did as ſhe deſired me. I performed a few pieces that I knew without book, flouriſhed ſome others irregularly, and then ſung a few verſes of Mondonville's pſalms.

Very

Very fine, indeed, ſaid the Superior; but we have devotional pieces in the church, as much as we pleaſe; we are alone, theſe are my friends, and they will alſo be yours; ſing us ſomething ſprightly. Some of the nuns obſerved: But perhaps theſe form all her ſtock; ſhe is fatigued with her journey; we muſt ſpare her; this is quite enough for once. —No, no, ſaid the Superior, ſhe accompanies delightfully, ſhe has the fineſt voice in the world (and really I have a very good one, with more correctneſs, ſweetneſs and flexibility indeed, than force and pitch); I will not let her off till ſhe gives us ſomething elſe.—I was a little offended at the remarks of the nuns, and anſwered the Superior, that my ſinging no longer amuſed the ſiſters.—But it ſtill amuſes me.—I ſuſpected the ſincerity of this anſwer. I ſung, however, a very delicate canzonette, and they all clapped, applauded, embraced, careſſed me, and entreated a ſecond. All this was little hollow grimace, dictated by the anſwer of the Superior. There was ſcarcely one of them but would have deprived me of my voice, and broken my fingers, had it been in her power. Thoſe who perhaps had never heard muſic in their lives, thought proper to expreſs themſelves of my ſinging in terms equally ridiculous and diſguſting, which by no means were well received by the Superior. Peace, ſaid ſhe to them, ſhe ſings and plays like an angel, and I wiſh her to come here every day; I myſelf *formerly underſtood the harpſichord a little*, and I wiſh her aſſiſtance in recovering what I have now forgotten. Ah! Madam, ſaid I, when we have once underſtood any thing, it is never entirely forgotten.... With all my heart then, give me your place....After a few flouriſhes, ſhe played ſome things, fooliſh, wild and incoherent, as her own ideas; but through all the defects of her

her execution, I ſaw ſhe had a touch infinitely ſuperior to mine. I told her ſo, for I am fond of beſtowing praiſe, and I rarely miſs the opportunity of doing it when conſiſtent with truth; it is attended with ſo agreeable a ſenſation! The nuns diſappeared one after the other, and I remained alone with the Superior to converſe of muſic. She was ſeated, I was ſtanding; ſhe took my hands, and ſqueezing them, ſaid to me, But beſides that ſhe plays finely, ſhe has the prettieſt fingers in the world; look here, Siſter Thereſa....Siſter Thereſa dropped her eyes to the ground, bluſhed and ſtuttered: yet whether I had pretty fingers or not, whether the Superior was right or wrong in the obſervation, how could this Siſter be affected by it? The Superior took me round the waiſt, and ſhe diſcovered that I had a very excellent ſhape; ſhe drew me towards her, and ſeated me on her knees. She turned my head, and bade me look at her. She praiſed my eyes, my mouth, my cheeks, my complexion. I made no anſwer; my eyes were fixed upon the ground, and I paſſively ſuffered all her careſſes. Siſter Thereſa was abſent, reſtleſs, walked confuſedly about, took up every thing, though ſhe wanted nothing, knew not what to make of herſelf, looked out at the window, imagined ſhe heard ſome one knock at the door. At laſt the Superior ſaid, Saint Thereſa, you may retire if you are weary.—I am not weary, Madam. But I have a thouſand queſtions to aſk this girl.—I have no doubt of it.—I am anxious to learn her whole hiſtory; how can I repair the ſufferings ſhe has been forced to undergo, if I know not what they are? I muſt have her recount them to me without omitting any thing; I am ſure my heart will be torn, and that I ſhall weep at her ſtory; but no matter: Saint Suſan, when are you to tell

me

me all this?—Madam, whenever you are pleaſed to deſire it.—I entreat you juſt now, if we have time. What o'clock is it?—Madam, it is five o'clock, replied Siſter Thereſa, and the bell is going to ring for veſpers.—Begin now however.—But Madam, you promiſed me a moment of conſolation before veſpers. I am diſquieted by unpleaſant thoughts, I would fain open my heart to you. If I go to ſervice without this precaution, I ſhall be unable to pray; my mind will wander.—No, no, ſaid the Superior, you are fooliſh with theſe ideas of yours. I wager I know what is the matter; we will ſpeak of it to-morrow.—Ah! dear mother, ſaid Siſter Thereſa, throwing herſelf at the feet of the Superior, and burſting into tears, let it be juſt now.—Madam, ſaid I to the Superior, riſing up from her knees, on which I had continued to ſit, grant my ſiſter the favour ſhe aſks, do not allow her to remain uneaſy: I will retire; opportunities will occur to ſatisfy the intereſt you are ſo good to take in my fortune; and when you have heard what Siſter Thereſa has to communicate, her uneaſineſs will vaniſh....I made a motion towards the door, in order to withdraw, but the Superior detained me with one of her hands; Siſter Thereſa upon her knees had taken the other, kiſſed it and bathed it with her tears, while the Superior ſaid to her, In truth, Saint Thereſa, you are extremely troubleſome with your diſquietudes; I have told you that I am diſpleaſed, that I am conſtrained by this conduct: I do not chooſe to be conſtrained.—I know it; but I am not miſtreſs of my thoughts; I wiſh ardently I could controul them, but I cannot.—Meanwhile I had retired, and left the young Siſter with the Superior. I could not refrain from looking at her in church. Her countenance ſtill diſcovered ſadneſs and depreſſion.

Our

Our eyes met ſeveral times, and I thought that ſhe could ſcarcely ſupport my looks. As for the Superior, ſhe had fallen aſleep in her pew.

Service was diſpatched in an inſtant: the choir, from what I could obſerve, was not the part of the houſe in which they were moſt happy. We left it with all the quickneſs and noiſe of a flock of birds juſt eſcaped from their aviary; and the Siſters ſeparated, running, laughing, and talking one with another. The Superior ſhut herſelf up in her cell, and Siſter Thereſa ſtopped at the door of hers, watching as if curious to know what was become of me. I retired to my apartment, and Siſter Thereſa's door a ſhort time after was ſhut very gently. It ſtruck me that this young girl was jealous of me, and that ſhe was afraid leſt I ſhould ſupplant her in the intimacy and good graces of the Superior. I obſerved her for ſome days following; and when I had aſcertained my ſuſpicion to be well founded, from her little reſentments, from her little alarms, her perſeverance in tracing every ſtep ſhe took in examining me, in interfering between the Superior and me, in interrupting our converſations, depreciating my qualities, and expoſing my faults, and ſtill more from the paleneſs of her looks, the gloom of her countenance, her ſighs, and the derangement of her health, and even of her mind, I went and ſaid to her, My dear friend, what is the matter with you?—She made me no reply; my viſit ſurpriſed and embarraſſed her; ſhe knew neither what to ſay, nor what to do.—You do me injuſtice; tell me, you are afraid leſt I take any improper advantage of the partiality which our mother has formed for me, in order to eſtrange you from her affections. Be aſſured this is not my character: if ever I have been fortunate enough to obtain any influence over her mind....—You will poſſeſs

poſſeſs as much as you think proper; ſhe loves you; ſhe now does for you what ſhe at firſt did for me.—Well! be aſſured I ſhall avail myſelf of the confidence which ſhe may place in me only for the purpoſe of rendering you dearer to her than ever.—And does this depend on you?—And why will it not depend on me?—Inſtead of returning me an anſwer, ſhe threw herſelf upon my neck, and ſaid to me with a ſigh: It is not your fault, I know it well; I ſay ſo to myſelf every moment; but promiſe me.....—What do you want me to promiſe?—That.....—Well, I'll do any thing in my power.—She heſitated; ſhe covered her eyes with her hands, and ſaid to me in a toue of voice ſo low that I could ſcarcely hear her, That you will ſee her as ſeldom as you can.....—This requeſt appeared to me ſo ſtrange, that I could not refrain from replying, And of what conſequence is it to you, whether I ſee our Superior often or ſeldom? It would give me no concern though you were never out of her ſight, and you muſt not be vexed were I to be as much with her: is it not ſufficient for me to proteſt to you, that I will neither injure you, nor any other perſon, in her opinion.—She made me no reply, but parting from me, and throwing herſelf down upon her bed, ſhe exclaimed in accents of ſorrow, I am undone!—Undone! How? But you will perſiſt in thinking me the wickedeſt creature in the world!

We were in this ſituation when the Superior came in. She had gone to my cell, and had not found me; ſhe had run in queſt of me through almoſt every part of the houſe, to no purpoſe; it had never entered her mind that I was with Siſter Saint Thereſa; when ſhe diſcovered it, however, by means of thoſe which ſhe had ſent in ſearch of me, ſhe haſtened to the cell. There were ſome

ſigns

ſigns of agitation in her look, and in her countenance; but the whole of her figure was rarely of a piece! Saint Thereſa ſat in ſilence upon her bed, and I at the foot of it. I ſaid to her, My dear mother, I aſk your pardon for coming here without your permiſſion.—It had been better, indeed, replied ſhe, had you requeſted leave.—But this dear ſiſter moved my compaſſion, I obſerved her uneaſy.—About what?—Shall I tell you? and why ſhould I not tell you? It is a ſort of delicacy which does honour to her mind, and marks the warmth of her attachment to you. The teſtimonies of kindneſs which you have given me, have alarmed her tenderneſs, and ſhe is afraid leſt I obtain in your heart a preference to her; this ſentiment of jealouſy, ſo honeſt, ſo natural, and ſo flattering to you, my dear mother, had, I perceived, become a ſource of pain to my ſiſter, and I came here to encourage her.—The Superior, after having liſtened to me, aſſumed a ſtern and commanding aſpect, and ſaid to her: Siſter Thereſa, I have loved you, and ſtill love you; I have no ground of complaint againſt you, and you never ſhall have any againſt me; but I cannot ſuffer theſe excluſive pretenſions. Lay them aſide, as you dread forfeiting my remaining eſteem: recollect the fate of Siſter Agatha.... Then turning to me, ſhe ſaid, I mean that tall black girl, whom you have ſeen oppoſite to me in the choir. (For I lived ſo retired, I had ſo lately come to the houſe, and I was ſo little acquainted, that I did not know the names of my companions). She added, I loved her when Siſter Thereſa came to the houſe, and ſhe naturally became an object of my attention. She felt the ſame ſort of uneaſineſs, and committed the ſame follies; I cautioned her, but ſhe did not correct them; and I was obliged to take ſome ſevere meaſures, which I have been

been under the neceſſity too long of continuing, and which are entirely foreign to my diſpoſition; for they will tell you, that I am a perſon of a mild temper, and that I never inflict puniſhment but with reluctance....Then addreſſing herſelf to Saint Thereſa, ſhe proceeded: My child, that I do not wiſh to be put under conſtraint, I have told you already; you know me; don't oblige me to do violence to my nature....Then, leaning one arm upon my ſhoulder, ſhe ſaid to me, Come, Saint Suſan, accompany me back to my cell. We went out. Siſter Thereſa wiſhed to follow us; but the Superior, leaning her head careleſsly back over my ſhoulders, deſired her, in a tone of authority, to return to her apartment, and not to leave it without her permiſſion....She obeyed, violently ſhut the door, and let ſome words eſcape, which made the Superior tremble, I know not why, for they had no meaning. I perceived her reſentment, and ſaid to her: My dear mother, if you have any kindneſs for me, pardon Siſter Thereſa; ſhe has forgotten herſelf; ſhe knows neither what ſhe ſays, nor what ſhe does.—Do you aſk me to forgive her? I have no inclination to do it; but what will you give me?—Ah! my dear mother, am I happy enough to have any thing which can pleaſe you, and which can appeaſe your anger?—She caſt her eyes downward, ſhe bluſhed, and ſighed; in truth, ſhe looked like a lover. Then, throwing herſelf careleſsly upon me, as if ſhe had been in a ſwoon, ſhe ſaid: Hold your forehead near me that I may kiſs it....I inclined myſelf forward, and ſhe kiſſed my brow. From that time, as ſoon as any of the nuns committed a fault, I interceded for them, and I was ſure to obtain her pardon by ſome innocent compliance, it was always a kiſs upon the forehead, the neck, the eyes, the cheeks, the mouth, the

the hands, the boſom, or the arms, but moſt frequently on the mouth; according to her, my breath was ſweet, my teeth white, and my lips freſh and red. In truth, I ſhould have been very pretty, had I deſerved a very ſmall portion of the praiſes which ſhe laviſhed upon me: if it was my forehead, it was white, ſmooth, and of a charming form; if my eyes, they were brilliant; if my cheeks, they were large and ſoft; if my hands, they were ſmall and handſome; if my boſom, it was firm, and of an exquiſite ſhape; if my arms, it was impoſſible that they could be rounder or more elegantly turned; if my neck, none of the ſiſters had one of ſuch extraordinary beauty; and I know not what beſides. There was ſome truth in her praiſes; I have repeated a great deal of it, but not all. Sometimes, looking at me from head to foot, with an air of complacency which I had never ſeen in any other woman, ſhe would ſay, Yes, it is the greateſt bleſſing that God has called her to this retreat; with ſuch a figure in the world, ſhe would have damned as many men as had ſeen her, and damned herſelf along with them. God orders all things well.

In the mean while we were advancing to her cell; I ſhewed a diſpoſition to leave her, but ſhe took me by the hand, and ſaid to me, It is too late to begin your hiſtory at Saint Mary's and at Longchamp, but come in, you will give me a ſhort leſſon upon the harpſichord. In a moment ſhe had opened the harpſichord, got ready a book, and brought me a chair, for ſhe was very active. I ſat down. She thought that I might be cold, and taking a cuſhion from off one of the chairs, ſhe put it before me, and ſtooping, ſhe took my two feet and placed them upon it; ſhe then planted herſelf behind me, and leaned upon the back of

my

my chair. After putting the inſtrument in tune, I played ſome pieces of Couprin, of Rameau, and of Scarlatti; in the mean time ſhe had lifted a corner of my neckerchief, and placed her hand upon my bare ſhoulder, with the extremities of her fingers upon my boſom. She ſighed; ſhe appeared to labour under an oppreſſion; her boſom palpitated; ſhe at firſt preſſed me hard upon the ſhoulder with her hand; ſhe then deſiſted; ſhe ſeemed to have loſt all power, and as if ſhe had been quite lifeleſs, her head fell down upon mine. In truth, ſhe had incredible ſenſibility, and the fineſt taſte for muſic; I never knew any perſon upon whom it produced ſuch ſingular effects.

We were thus amuſing ourſelves, in a manner equally ſimple and agreeable, when ſuddenly the door burſt open with ſuch violence, that both I and the Superior were alarmed. It was that madcap Thereſa. Her dreſs was diſordered; her eyes looked wild. She examined the appearance of us both with the moſt particular attention; her lips quivered, and ſhe was unable to ſpeak. She ſoon recollected herſelf, however, and threw herſelf at the feet of the Superior. I joined my entreaties to hers, and again obtained her pardon. But the Superior proteſted, in the moſt decided manner, that it ſhould be the laſt, at leaſt for faults of this nature; and we then withdrew together.

Returning to our cells, I ſaid to her: Dear ſiſter, take care, you will totally deprive yourſelf of the favour of your Superior. I will not abandon your intereſt, but you put my credit with her too ſeverely to the proof; and I ſhould be afflicted beyond meaſure, to be no longer able to employ it in the ſervice of you and of our companions. But by what fancies are you poſſeſſed?—To this, no anſwer.—What apprehenſions do you entertain

of

of me?—To this, no anſwer.—May not our mother feel an equal attachment to both?—No, no, ſaid ſhe, with great emotion, that is impoſſible; I muſt ſoon become diſguſting to her, and I ſhall die with grief! Ah! why did you come here? you will not long be happy, that I am ſure, and I ſhall be for ever wretched.—But I am ſenſible, ſaid I, that to have loſt the favour of the Superior is a great misfortune; but I know a greater ſtill, and that is, to have deſerved it. You, however, have nothing to reproach yourſelf upon that ſubject.—Ah! would to God it were ſo!—If your own mind accuſes you of any fault, you ought to repair it! and the ſureſt way of effecting this object, is to ſupport the puniſhment of it with patience.—That I cannot, I cannot; and is it her part too to inflict the penalty?—Her part! Siſter Thereſa, her part! is it thus you ſpeak of a Superior? This is not at all right; you forget yourſelf. I am ſure the fault you now commit, is more ſerious than any with which you can reproach yourſelf.—Ah! would to God it were ſo! ſhe repeated; would to God it were!....And here we ſeparated, ſhe to hide herſelf in her cell, I to meditate in mine, upon the whimſies with which women's head's abound. Such is the conſequence of ſecluſion. Man is born for ſociety. Separate him from his kind, place him in an iſolated ſtate, his ideas will become diſtorted, his character will be reverſed, a thouſand abſurd affections will ſpring up in his heart, his mind will teem with extravagant thoughts, as an uncultivated field is overrun with noxious weeds. Place a man in a foreſt, and he will become ſavage; in a cloiſter, where the idea of compulſion is combined with that of ſervitude, and it is ſtill worſe. He may quit the foreſt, but the cloiſter he can never abandon. He is free in the foreſt,

he

he is a ſlave in the cloiſter. It perhaps requires more ſtrength of mind to withſtand ſolitude than miſery. Miſery degrades, but ſecluſion depraves. Is it better to live in a ſtate of contempt than in a ſtate of folly? It is a queſtion which I ſhall not preſume to decide; but they both are calamities which we ought to ſhun.

I perceived that the tenderneſs which the Superior had conceived for me daily increaſed. I was conſtantly in her cell, or ſhe in mine. For the ſlighteſt indiſpoſition ſhe ordered me to receive the benefit of the infirmary, ſhe diſpenſed with my performance of duties, ſhe ſent me early to bed, or excuſed me from riſing to matins. In the choir, in the refectory, at recreation, ſhe contrived to ſhew me marks of friendſhip. In the choir, if any verſe occurred which contained a ſentiment of tenderneſs and affection, ſhe would ſing it, addreſſing herſelf to me; or, if it was ſung by another, ſhe fixed her looks upon me with a particular expreſſion. In the refectory, ſhe always ſent me a part of the greateſt delicacy with which ſhe herſelf was ſerved. At recreation, ſhe would embrace me round the waiſt, and ſay the ſofteſt and moſt obliging things. She never received a preſent in which I did not participate; ſugar, coffee, liqueurs, ſnuff, linen, napkins, in ſhort, whatever it was.—She ſtripped her own cell of prints, utenſils, furniture, and an infinite number of agreeable or convenient articles, in order to embelliſh mine. I could ſcarcely be abſent a moment, but on my return I found myſelf enriched by ſome new preſent. When I went to her cell to expreſs my thanks, ſhe felt a joy which it is impoſſible to deſcribe; ſhe embraced, careſſed me, took me upon her knees, talked to me of the moſt ſecret concerns of the houſe; and, if I loved her, ſhe promiſed

promiſed herſelf a life a thouſand times more happy than ſhe could have enjoyed in the world. Then ſhe would ſtop, and gaze upon me with languiſhing eyes, and ſay: Siſter Suſan, do you love me? —How is it poſſible that I ſhould not love you? If I did not, my heart muſt be ungrateful indeed. —True.—You are ſo good!—Say, rather, ſo fond of you...Saying this, ſhe fixed her eyes upon the ground, ſhe embraced me more ardently with the hand that encircled my waiſt; ſhe ſighed, ſhe trembled; ſhe ſeemed as if ſhe had been deſirous to communicate to me ſome ſecret which ſhe was afraid to reveal. Tears ſtreamed from her eyes, while ſhe ſaid to me, Ah! Siſter Suſan, you do not love me.—I do not love you, dear mother! No.—Tell me then what I muſt do to prove it.—You muſt gueſs that.—I reflect, but nothing occurs to my mind. (1) ***\

reproached me with nothing, I will yet confeſs to you, Sir, that I was embarraſſed by her queſtion. She perceived it, and urged me to tell her, till at laſt I replied: Dear ſiſter, perhaps you will not truſt my account, but you will probably believe that of our dear mother, and I will requeſt her to inform you.—My dear Saint Suſan, ſaid ſhe, with eagerneſs, beware of that; ſurely you do not wiſh to render me wretched; ſhe would never pardon my curioſity; you are not acquainted with her character; ſhe is capable of paſſing from the greateſt tenderneſs to the extreme of ferocity; I know not to what extent I ſhould experience her indignation. Promiſe me never to mention to her a word of this.—Do you ſeriouſly make that requeſt?—I aſk it upon my knees. I am afflicted beyond meaſure; I ſee clearly that I muſt ſummon reſolution to ſubmit, and I will exert it. Promiſe me to mention nothing of this to her.....—I raiſed her up, and gave her my word. She was ſatisfied with this pledge, and with reaſon. We then withdrew, ſhe to her cell, I to mine.

After returning to my apartment, I found myſelf thoughtful; I attempted to pray, but could not. I endeavoured to be buſy. I began one piece of work, which I laid aſide for another; I again quitted this for a third; my hands refuſed their ſervice, and I appeared quite enfeebled; never had I experienced a ſimilar ſituation; my eyelids cloſed of themſelves; I fell into a ſhort ſlumber, although I never ſlept in the day-time. When I awoke, I queſtioned my own mind upon what had paſſed between the Superior and me; I examined myſelf; and even now, when I ſubject myſelf to this examination, I think I can diſcover....but the ideas which ſuggeſted themſelves, were ſo vague, ſo fantaſtic, ſo ridiculous, that I rejected them with diſdain.

diſdain. The reſult of my reflections was, that it was ſome malady to which ſhe was ſubject. I next imagined, that perhaps the malady was infectious, that it had ſeized Saint Thereſa, and that I alſo ſhould feel its attack.

Next morning, after matins, our Superior ſaid to me: Saint Suſan, to-day I hope to be made acquainted with all your adventures; come.... I went along with her. She placed me in her arm chair by the ſide of her bed, and ſhe ſeated herſelf upon a chair that was a little lower. She was below me, becauſe I am taller, and I was alſo upon a higher ſeat. We were cloſe together, her elbows leaning upon the bed. After a ſhort interval of ſilence, I began: Although I am young, I have experienced a great deal of ſuffering. It will ſoon be twenty years ſince I came into the world, and the twenty years of my life, mark alſo the period of my miſeries. I don't know whether I am able to tell you all, though you were diſpoſed to hear it. My hiſtory is one melancholy train of miſery; miſery in the houſe of my parents, miſery in the convent of Saint Mary, miſeries in the convent of Longchamp, miſeries in every ſituation; where, dear mother, am I to begin?—Begin with the very firſt.—But, dear mother, ſaid I, that will be a very long and a very ſad ſtory, and I ſhould be unwilling to wound your heart ſo much with ſorrowful events. —Fear not, I am fond of weeping; tears are accompanied with many delightful ſenſations to a mind of ſenſibility. You ſhould like to weep too; you will wipe away my tears, and I will wipe away yours; and, perhaps, we ſhall be happy in the very middle of the ſtory of your ſufferings: who knows to what point the feelings of tenderneſs may carry us?....Saying theſe words, ſhe looked up to me with eyes already moiſtened; ſhe took my

two

two hands, and drew me nearer to her, till we touched each other. Begin your narration, my child, ſaid ſhe, I am all expectation; I feel within me a diſpoſition tremblingly alive to tenderneſs; never in my whole life have I felt my heart more ſympathiſing and more affectionate....I began my ſtory nearly as I have now related it in writing to you. It is impoſſible for me to deſcribe the effects which it produced upon her feelings; the ſighs ſhe breathed, the tears ſhe ſhed, the expreſſions of indignation ſhe uttered againſt my cruel parents, againſt the unrelenting nuns of Saint Mary's and Longchamp. I ſhould be extremely ſorry that the leaſt of the evils ſhe imprecated upon their heads, ſhould overtake them. I ſhould not wiſh to hurt a hair of the head of my bittereſt enemy. From time to time ſhe interrupted me, walked through the room, and again reſumed her place. Again ſhe would raiſe her eyes and her hands to heaven, and then conceal her head between my knees. When I ſpoke of the ſcenes of the dungeon, of my exorciſm, of the ignominious puniſhment to which I was ſubjected upon the loſs of my ſuit, ſhe cried aloud; when I finiſhed my narration I was ſilent, and ſhe remained ſometime leaning upon the bed, her face hid in the clothes, and her arms extended above her head. Dear mother, then ſaid I, I entreat your pardon for the pain I have occaſioned you; I warned you againſt it, and I only ſubmitted to your own deſire....She anſwered only with theſe words: Wicked creatures! horrible creatures! It is in convents alone that humanity can be ſo completely extinguiſhed.—When hatred is combined with habitual malignity of temper, it is impoſſible to ſay to what length cruelty may be carried. Happily I am of a kind diſpoſition, I love all my nuns. They have all, in

a greater or leſs degree, formed themſelves upon my character, and they entertain a mutual affection for each other. But how could this delicate conſtitution reſiſt ſo many torments? How were not all theſe little members irreparably injured? How did this delicate frame eſcape being deſtroyed? How were not the luſtre of theſe eyes extinguiſhed by ſo many tears? Cruel wretches! to bind theſe arms with cords!....and ſhe took my arms and kiſſed them....To drown theſe eyes in tears!.... and ſhe kiſſed them....To extort groans and ſighs from that mouth!....and ſhe kiſſed it....To condemn that ſerene and beauteous countenance to veil itſelf continually in clouds and ſorrow!.... and ſhe kiſſed it....To wither the roſes on theſe cheeks!....and ſhe pinched them with her fingers, and kiſſed them....To violate that head! tear that hair! load that brow with anxiety!....and ſhe kiſſed my head, my brow, my hair....To dare encircle that neck with cords, and tear theſe ſhoulders with ſharp points!....and ſhe kiſſed them

* *

We remained in ſilence a good while, till at laſt the Superior obſerved: Suſan, from what you ſay of your firſt Superior, I imagine ſhe muſt have been very dear to you.—Very dear, indeed.—She did not love you better than I do, but ſhe was more beloved....You give me no anſwer?—I was wretched, and ſhe ſoothed my ſorrows. But whence ariſes your repugnance to the religious life? Suſan, you have not told me all.—Pardon me, Madam, I have indeed.—What! it is impoſſible, lovely as you are, (for, my child, you are moſt lovely—you cannot conceive how very much) that no perſon has told you ſo.—I have been told ſo.—And he who has told you was not diſagreeable to you?—No.—And you conceive no attachment

to

to him?—Not the leaſt.—What! your heart has never been touched?—Never.—What! there was no paſſion, either ſecret or diſapproved by your parents, that inſpired your averſion to the convent? Confide your ſecret to me, I am indulgent.—I have no ſecret of that kind, dear mother, to entruſt you with.—But, once more, whence ariſes your repugnance to the religious life?—From the life itſelf. I hate its duties, its employments; I deteſt ſecluſion and conſtraint; I think myſelf deſtined for another ſituation.—But, upon what foundation does that idea appear to reſt?—Upon the diſguſt with which I am overwhelmed; I am diſſatisfied, I am diſcontented with my ſituation.—Even here?—Yes, dear mother, even here; in ſpite of all the kindneſs you have ſhown me.—But, is it becauſe you are conſcious of certain emotions, certain deſires?—I have none.—I believe it; you ſeem to be of a tranquil character.—Very much ſo.—Even cold.—I don't know.—You are not acquainted with the world?—Very little.—What attractions then can it poſſeſs for you?—That I do not myſelf exactly comprehend; but, certainly, ſuch muſt exiſt.—Is it liberty you regret?—Probably, and many other things beſide.—And pray what may theſe other things be? My friend, open your heart freely to me; would you wiſh to be married?—I ſhould prefer it to my preſent ſituation, that is certain.—On what is that preference founded?—I do not know.—You do not know! but, tell me what impreſſion does the preſence of a man communicate?—None: if he is a man of ſenſe, and ſpeaks well, I liſten to him with pleaſure; if he is handſome, I remark his figure.—And your heart remains tranquil?—Hitherto it has experienced no emotion.—What! when they have fixed their ardent glances on yours, you never felt....—Some-

times embarraſſment; I was obliged to turn my eyes to the ground.---And without any trouble? ---None.---And your ſenſes ſaid nothing?---I am unacquainted with the language of the ſenſes.--- They have a language of their own however.--- Very poſſibly.---And you are unacquainted with it? ---Perfectly.----What! you.....It is a delightful language; would you wiſh to know it?---No, my dear mother, what advantage ſhould I derive from the knowledge?---It would diſſipate your diſſatiſfaction.---Perhaps increaſe it. And beſides, what avails that language without an object?---When we ſpeak, it is always to ſome one; that, doubtleſs, is better than to confine ourſelves to ſolitary entertainment, though not unaccompanied with pleaſure. ---I do not at all underſtand the ſubject.---If you pleaſe, my dear child, I will explain myſelf more clearly.---No, dear mother, no. I am ignorant, and I prefer that ſituation, to the acquiſition of knowledge that would render me, perhaps, more wretched than I am. I have no deſires, nor do I wiſh to diſcover ſuch as I cannot gratify.---And why can you not?---And how can I?---How very innocent ſhe is!---True; I am, dear mother, and I would die a thouſand deaths rather than ceaſe to be ſo....I know not what unpleaſant circumſtance theſe laſt words might ſeem to her to contain, but ſhe ſuddenly changed countenance, ſhe became ſerious and embarraſſed. Her hand, which ſhe had laid upon one of my knees, ceaſed to preſs me, and was then withdrawn. She remained with her eyes fixed upon the ground.—My dear mother, ſaid I, what have I done? Can any thing offend you that has eſcaped my lips? forgive me. I exerciſe the liberty you have allowed me; none of the obſervations I make to you are ſtudied; and though I were to prepare them, I ſhould expreſs them

them no otherwiſe, perhaps worſe. The ſubject upon which we converſe is ſo very ſtrange! pardon me.... Saying theſe words, I threw my arms round her neck, and leant my head upon her ſhoulder. She threw hers round me, and preſſed me very tenderly. We remained in this poſture a few moments; then reſuming her tenderneſs, and her ſerenity, Sufan, ſaid ſhe, do you ſleep well?—Very well, ſaid I, eſpecially of late.—Is your ſleep uninterrupted?—Moſt commonly.—When your ſlumbers are broken, how are your thoughts employed?—Upon my paſt life, and upon my future proſpects; I pray, or I weep, I can't tell?—And in the morning, when you awake early?—I riſe.—Whenever you awake? Whenever I awake.—You are not fond then of indulging your fancy?- -No.—Of repoſing upon your pillow?—No.—Of enjoying the genial warmth of the bed?—No.—Never?....******** I do not know what farther converſation we had, when a meſſage was brought that ſhe was wanted in the parlour. I thought I perceived that this viſit cauſed her a good deal of chagrin, and that ſhe would have much rather preferred to have remained chatting with me, although our converſation was not deſerving of much regret. We ſeparated however.

The community had at no time been happier, than ſince I became a member of it. The Superior ſeemed to have loſt the inequality of her character; it was obſerved that I had fixed her capricious temper. To pleaſe me, ſhe even gave ſeveral days of recreation, and what are called feſtivals. Upon theſe days the entertainment is a little better than ordinary, the ſervices are likewiſe curtailed, and the intervals between them are allowed for recreation. But this happy period was deſtined to paſs away, both for others and for me.

Diſquietude began to prey upon the heart of the Superior; her perſon waſted away, ſhe loſt her gaiety, her ſleep vaniſhed. The night which ſucceeded our laſt converſation, when ſleep had cloſed every eye, and ſilence reigning in the houſe, ſhe roſe. After wandering ſome time through the paſſages, ſhe came to my cell; I was in a light ſlumber; I thought I heard her; ſhe ſtopped, as ſhe leant her head upon my door, ſhe ſeemed to make ſufficient noiſe to awake me, although I had been aſleep. I remained ſilent, I imagined I heard the voice of ſome one uttering moans, of ſome one breathing ſighs. At firſt I was ſeized with a ſlight ſhivering of horror; I then determined to ſay *Ave*. Inſtead of returning any anſwer, the perſon glided lightly away. Some time after, the viſit was repeated: again I heard the ſound of ſighs and moans; I again repeated *Ave*, and a ſecond time the perſon retired. I ſummoned up my courage, and by and by fell aſleep. While I was aſleep the ſame perſon entered, ſat down by my bed-ſide, drew my curtain with one hand, and in the other held a candle, the light of which beamed upon my countenance, while ſhe who carried it, gazed on me as I ſlept; ſuch, at leaſt, was the concluſion I formed from her attitude when I opened my eyes. This perſon was the Superior. I ſuddenly ſtarted up. She perceived my fright, and ſaid, Suſan, be not alarmed, it is I.... I dropped my head again upon my pillow, and ſaid, Dear mother, what has brought you here this time of night? What is the purpoſe of this viſit? Why are you not now aſleep?—I cannot ſleep, replied ſhe, it will be a long time ere I ſleep. I am tormented by frightful dreams. No ſooner have I ſhut my eyes, than the ſufferings you have endured, paint themſelves anew to my imagination; I behold

you

you in the hands of thoſe inhuman wretches, I ſee your hair diſhevelled, your feet gored, the torch in your hand, the cord round your neck; I think they are about to take your life; I tremble, I ſhudder with horror, a cold perſpiration covers my whole body; I wiſh to fly to your aſſiſtance, I cry out; I awake, and in vain wait the return of ſleep. Such has been my ſituation this night. I feared that heaven thus announced to me ſome misfortune which had befallen my friend; I aroſe, I came to your door, I liſtened, I thought you were not aſleep, you ſpoke, and I retired; I returned, you again ſpoke, and again I withdrew. I returned a third time; and when I thought you were aſleep, I entered. I have been at your ſide ſome time, and was afraid to awake you; I heſitated at firſt whether I ſhould draw the curtains, from a fear of interrupting your repoſe; I intended to go away, but I could not reſiſt the deſire of ſeeing if my dear Suſan was well. I gazed upon you. How lovely a ſight do you preſent, even when you ſleep!—My dear mother, how kind you are!—I feel myſelf affected by the cold, but I know that I have nothing diſagreeable to apprehend for my friend, and I believe I ſhall ſleep. Give me your hand.—I preſented it to her.—How calm is her pulſe! how equal! No paſſion agitates her frame!—I have enjoyed a very peaceable ſlumber.—How happy are you!—Dear mother, you continue to expoſe yourſelf to the cold.—You are right; adieu, my lovely friend, adieu; I am going away. She did not go, however, but continued to gaze upon me, while two tears dropped from her eyes. Dear mother, ſaid I, what is the matter with you? you weep; how ſorry am I to have talked to you of my ſufferings!.... * * * * * * Are you ill? dear mother, ſaid I, what muſt I do?—I tremble, ſaid ſhe, I

ſhudder, a mortal coldneſs poſſeſſes my whole body. —Do you wiſh me to riſe, and reſign you my place?—No, ſaid ſhe, it would not be neceſſary for you to riſe; raiſe the bed-clothes only a little, that I may warm myſelf beſide you, and remove my indiſpoſition.—Dear mother, ſaid I, but that is forbidden. What would be ſaid of it were it known? In the convent of St. Mary, a nun happened to go by night to the cell of another, her particular friend, and I cannot repeat to you all the cenſures which it occaſioned. The Director ſometimes has aſked me if any perſon had ever propoſed to come and ſleep beſide me, and he ſeriouſly enjoined me never to allow it to be done. I have even ſpoken to him of your careſſes. In my opinion they are innocent, but he conſiders them in a different light. I don't know how I came to forget his advice; I intended to ſpeak to you on the ſubject.—My dear friend, all around us are aſleep, no one ſhall know of it. It is my province to reward and to puniſh; and let the Director ſay what he will, I ſee no harm in one friend admitting beſide her a friend, whom apprehenſions have alarmed; who has awoke, and come during the night, in ſpite of the inclemency of the ſeaſon, to ſee whether or not her dearly-beloved is in danger. Suſan, have you never ſhared the ſame bed in the houſe of your parents, with one of your ſiſters?—No, never.—If the occaſion for doing it had occurred, would you not have agreed to it without ſcruple? If your ſiſter, diſquieted with apprehenſions, and benumbed with cold, had aſked a place beſide you, would you have refuſed?—I believe not.—And am not I your dear mother?—Yes, you are, but that is forbidden—My dear friend, it is by me it is prohibited to others, and it is I who permit, who even require it of you. Let

me

me warm myſelf one moment, and I will go away. Give me your hand.... I gave it her. Hold, ſaid ſhe, feel, obſerve; I tremble, I ſhudder, I am cold as marble.... And indeed it was true. Oh! dear mother, your health will ſuffer in conſequence of this. But, ſtop, I will turn to one ſide, and place you in the warm place..... I adjuſted myſelf on one ſide, I lifted up the clothes, and ſhe took my place. Oh, how ill ſhe was! A general tremor ſhook every member of her body; ſhe attempted to ſpeak, ſhe endeavoured to approach me, but ſhe could neither articulate nor ſtir. In a feeble tone ſhe ſaid to me, Suſan, my dear, come a little nearer to me.... She ſtretched out her arms. I turned my back to her. She gently took hold of me, and drew me towards her. She placed one arm under and another over me, and ſaid: I am frozen; I am ſo cold, that I am afraid of touching you for fear of hurting you.—Dear mother, never fear.—Then ſhe put one of her hands upon my breaſt, and another round my waiſt. Her feet were placed under mine, and I preſſed them in order to warm them, while the dear mother ſaid to me: Ah! my dear friend, ſee how ſoon my feet have recovered warmth when nothing interpoſes between them and yours.—But, ſaid I, may you not warm your whole body in the ſame manner?—Yes, if you pleaſe. I had turned round, when, ſuddenly, two violent knocks were heard at the door. Terrified at the noiſe, I inſtantly leaped out of bed on the one ſide, and the Superior on the other. We liſtened, and heard ſome one on tip-toe return to the neighbouring cell. Ah! ſaid I, it is Siſter Thereſa, who has ſeen you go along the paſſage, and enter my apartment. She muſt have liſtened and overheard our converſation. What will ſhe ſay?.... I was more dead than alive.

Yes, it is ſhe, ſaid the Superior, in an irritated tone, it is ſhe, I have no doubt; but I hope ſhe will long remember her temerity.—Ah! dear mother, ſaid I, do her no harm.—Suſan, ſaid ſhe to me, adieu, good night; go to bed, ſleep well; I give you a diſpenſation from morning prayers. I will go to that ſtrange girl. Give me your hand.... I ſtretched out my hand from one ſide of the bed to the other; ſhe lifted the ſleeve which covered the arm, and kiſſed it with a ſigh, and ſhe went away, proteſting that the raſh girl who had dared to trouble her, ſhould remember it. I immediately leant towards the ſide of my bed next the door, and liſtened. She went to Siſter Thereſa's apartment. I had a ſtrong inclination to riſe and interpoſe between her and the Superior, if any violent ſcene happened to enſue; but I was ſo troubled, my feelings were ſo unpleaſant, that I preferred lying ſtill in bed; I could not ſleep; however, I thought that I was about to become the topic of converſation in the houſe; that this adventure, which in itſelf was very ſimple, would be related with the moſt unfavourable circumſtances; that it would give riſe to calumnies ſtill worſe than thoſe I was expoſed to at Longchamp, when I was accuſed of crimes of which I am ignorant; that our fault would come to the knowledge of the Superiors; that our mother would be depoſed, and that both of us would be ſeverely puniſhed. I ſtill, however, kept my ears upon the watch, with impatience, till our mother ſhould leave Thereſa's cell. This affair ſeemed difficult to accommodate, for ſhe ſpent there almoſt the whole night. How I pitied her! She was only covered with her ſhift, and chilled with cold, and trembling with reſentment.

In

In the morning I had a ſtrong deſire to avail myſelf of the permiſſion ſhe had given me, and to remain in bed. It occurred to me, however, that I ought not to do ſo. I dreſſed myſelf in haſte, and was the firſt at the choir, where the Superior and Saint Thereſa did not appear; a circumſtance at which I was highly pleaſed; in the firſt place, becauſe I ſhould have had no ſmall difficulty to ſupport the looks of this ſiſter without embarraſſment; and in the ſecond place, ſince ſhe had obtained permiſſion to be abſent from ſervice, ſhe had in all probability obtained forgiveneſs, which would not be granted but upon conditions calculated to render my mind perfectly eaſy. I gueſſed right. No ſooner was ſervice over, than the Superior ſent for me. I went and ſaw her. She was ſtill in bed, and ſeemed depreſſed. I have been very ill, ſaid ſhe, I have not ſlept at all; Saint Thereſa is out of her ſenſes; if ſhe does ſuch a thing again, I will confine her.—Ah! dear mother, ſaid I, do not think of confining her.—That will depend upon her own conduct. She has promiſed to behave better, and I hope ſhe will keep her word. And you, dear Sufan, how are you?—Well, dear mother.—Have you enjoyed any repoſe?—Very little.—I was told that you were at the choir; why did you not remain in bed?—I ſhould not have found myſelf eaſy there; and beſides, I thought it was better....—No, there would have been no harm, although you had not gone out. But I feel ſome inclination to ſleep; I adviſe you to go and do the ſame in your cell, unleſs you prefer accepting a place beſide me.—Dear mother, I am infinitely obliged to you, I am accuſtomed to lie alone, and I could not ſleep along with another.—Go then. I will not go down to the refectory to dinner. I ſhall be ſerved here, and perhaps I may not riſe

all

all day.—You will come along with ſome others whom I have invited.—And is Siſter Saint Thereſa to be here, ſaid I?—No, ſhe replied.—I am not ſorry for that.—And why?—I don't know, I ſeem as if I were afraid to meet her.—Courage, my child; I will anſwer for it, that ſhe is more afraid of you than you have reaſon to be of her.

I left the room, and went to bed myſelf. In the afternoon I repaired to the Superior's apartment, where I found a pretty numerous company of nuns, the youngeſt and handſomeſt in the houſe. The reſt had paid their viſits and retired. I aſſure you, Sir, who are yourſelf a judge of painting, that the aſſemblage preſented a very agreeable picture. Conceive to yourſelf a group of between ten and twelve perſons, the youngeſt of which might be about fifteen, and the oldeſt not twenty-three; a Superior bordering upon forty, fair, ruddy, plump, half raiſed up in her bed, with a double chin, which became her extremely; arms round as if they had been turned; fingers taper and interſperſed with dimples; two black eyes, large, lively and tender, ſeldom quite open, half ſhut, as if ſhe to whom they belonged had felt ſome difficulty in opening them; lips that diſplayed the vermillion of the roſe; teeth white as milk; the moſt beautiful cheeks; a very pleaſing head, ſunk in a pillow of down; her arms extended careleſsly by her ſides, and little cuſhions to ſupport her elbows. I was ſeated on the edge of the bed, doing nothing; another in an arm chair, with a ſmall embroidery frame upon her knee. Others, near the windows, were employed in working lace. Some were ſeated on the ground, upon the cuſhions they had taken from the chairs, ſewing, embroidering, or ſpinning on ſmall wheels. Some were fair, others brown; no one reſembled another, though all were beauti-

ful.

ful. Their characters were as various as their phyſiognomies. Some were ſerene, others ſprightly, others ſerious, ſad or melancholy. They were all engaged in ſome kind of work, as I have mentioned, except myſelf. It was not difficult to diſcover who were friends, who indifferent, and who enemies. The friends were placed beſide or oppoſite to each other. As they worked, they talked, they conſulted; they looked by ſtealth at each other, and preſſed each others fingers, on pretence of lending a needle, a pin, or the ſciſſars. The Superior ſurveyed them all; ſhe blamed one for aſſiduity, another for idleneſs; this for her indifference, that for her ſadneſs; ſhe made them bring her their work; ſhe praiſed or blamed; ſhe adjuſted the head-dreſs of one.... That veil comes too much forward.... That cap encroaches too much upon the face, it does not diſplay enough of your cheeks.... Theſe folds have a bad effect.... And upon all ſhe beſtowed either ſlight reproofs or little endearments.

While we were thus employed, I heard a gentle knock at the door, and I went to it. Saint Suſan, ſaid the Superior, you will return.—Yes, dear mother—Do not fail, for I have ſomething of importance to communicate to you.—I come back this moment.... It was poor Saint Thereſa. She remained a few moments without ſpeaking, and ſo did I; at laſt, Dear ſiſter ſaid I, is it I you wiſh to ſee?—Yes:—In what manner can I be of ſervice to you?—I will tell you. I have fallen into diſgrace with the Superior. I thought ſhe had forgiven me, and I had ſome reaſon to think ſo; yet you are all aſſembled in her apartment, I am not of the party, and have received orders to remain in my cell.—Do you wiſh to join us?—Yes.—Are you anxious that I ſhould ſolicit permiſſion for you?—Yes.—

Yes.---Stop there, my dear friend; I will go for that purpoſe. —Sincerely, will you ſpeak to her in my favour.?---Certainly; why ſhould I refuſe to promiſe you ſo, and why ſhould I not fulfil my promiſe after it is given?—Ah! ſaid ſhe, gazing tenderly upon me, I forgive, I forgive her the attachment ſhe has conceived to you; you poſſeſs every charm, a beauteous mind as well as a lovely form.... I was tranſported to have it in my power to confer upon her this little piece of ſervice. I re-entered the room. In my abſence another had taken my place on the ſide of the Superior's bed. She was leaning forwards, her two elbows ſupported upon the cuſhions, ſhowing her work. The Superior, with eyes almoſt ſhut, ſaid yes and no, almoſt without looking at it; and I was ſtanding by her ſide before ſhe perceived me. She ſoon recovered, however, from this ſlight fit of abſence. She who had taken my place reſigned it to me; I reſumed my ſeat, and then leaning gently towards the Superior, who had raiſed herſelf a little upon the pillow, I preſerved ſilence; but I looked at her with an expreſſion that ſeemed deſirous to aſk her ſome favour. Well, ſaid ſhe, what is the matter? Speak, what is it you wiſh? Do you think it poſſible for me to refuſe any thing you aſk?—Siſter Saint Thereſa....—I underſtand; I am much diſſatisfied with her, but Saint Suſan intercedes, and I grant her pardon. Go, tell her ſhe may come in....—I ran to find her. The poor dear Siſter waited at the door. I told her to advance. She did ſo, trembling, and with downcaſt eyes; ſhe held a long piece of muſlin fixed to a frame, which dropped from her hands at the firſt ſtep. I gathered it up, took her by the hand, and led her to the Superior. She knelt down upon her knees, took one of her hands, which ſhe kiſſed, ſighed, and

dropped

dropped a tear. She then took one of mine, joined it to the Superior's, and kiſſed them both. The Superior made a ſign to her to riſe and place herſelf wherever ſhe pleaſed. She obeyed. A collation was ſerved up. The Superior roſe; ſhe did not ſit down to table along with us, but ſhe walked round, laying her hand upon the head of one, gently turning it back and kiſſing her brow; lifting the neckerchief of another, placing her hand upon her boſom, and leaning upon the back of the chair; paſſing to a third, embracing her with one hand careleſsly thrown round her neck, or laying it on her mouth; taſting, with the tip of her lips, the delicacies that were ſerved up, and then diſtributing them among her favourites.—After going round in this manner awhile, ſhe ſtopped oppoſite to me, ſurveying me with looks of affection and tenderneſs. The reſt of the nuns, eſpecially Siſter Saint Thereſa, had fixed their eyes upon the ground, as if fearful of conſtraining or withdrawing her attention. The collation being finiſhed, I ſat down to the harpſichord, and accompanied two Siſters, who ſung without method, but with taſte, correctneſs, and voice. I ſung alſo, and accompanied myſelf. The Superior was ſeated at the foot of the harpſichord, and ſeemed to enjoy the moſt exquiſite pleaſure in ſeeing and hearing me. The reſt ſtood and liſtened, without doing any thing, or reſumed their work. The evening was ſpent very delightfully. When it was over, all retired.

I was going away with the reſt, but the Superior ſtopped me. What o'clock is it? ſaid ſhe to me.—Juſt ſix.—Some of our diſcreet Siſters are coming. I have reflected upon what you told me of your departure from Longchamp. I have communicated to them my ideas upon the ſubject, which

which have received their approbation, and we have a propoſal to make you....---At ſix o'clock theſe diſcreet ladies appeared; the diſcretion that is to be found in religious houſes, is always very old and very decrepid. I roſe; they ſat down; and the Superior ſaid to me, Siſter Saint Suſan, did you not inform me that you owe to the kindneſs of M. Manouri the dowry with which you were eſtabliſhed here?---Yes, dear mother.---I am then correct; and the Siſters of Longchamp have remained in poſſeſſion of the dowry you paid them when you entered the houſe?---Yes, dear mother. ---They allow you no annuity?---No, dear mother. ---That is unjuſt. This is the circumſtance which I have communicated to theſe ladies, and they are of opinion with me, that you have a right either to ſue them for reſtitution of that dowry, to be applied to the uſe of our houſe, or for the intereſt of it. What you derive from the ſolicitude M. Manouri has diſplayed for your happineſs, is perfectly diſtinct from the claims you have upon the Siſters of Longchamp. It was not to acquit them of the obligation, that he furniſhed you the dowry.---I do not believe that he did; but the ſhorteſt way to aſcertain the point, is to write to him.---Certainly.---But in caſe his anſwer be ſuch as we wiſh, the following are the propoſals we have to make to you. We inſtitute the action in your name againſt the houſe of Longchamp; ours will pay the expence, which will not be very conſiderable, becauſe in all probability M. Manouri will not refuſe to undertake the conduct of the buſineſs; and if we gain, the houſe will ſhare equally with you the capital or the intereſt. What is your opinion, dear ſiſter? You make no anſwer, you ſeem thoughtful.---I am thinking that the Siſters of Longchamp have done me much evil,

and

and I ſhould be ſorry were they to imagine that I wiſhed for revenge.—Revenge is out of the queſtion; the matter is to reclaim what is your juſt right.—Preſent myſelf again a public ſpectacle!—That is the leaſt inconvenience; you will ſcarce ever be mentioned. And beſides, this community is poor, and that of Longchamp is rich. You will be our benefactreſs, at leaſt as long as you live; we do not require that motive to intereſt us in your preſervation, we all love you....And then all theſe diſcreet ladies whom ſhe had brought to the conſultation exclaimed together, And who would not love her? She is perfect....Every moment I am in danger of being cut off; another Superior would not perhaps entertain for you the ſame ſentiments that I do; ah! no ſurely ſhe would not. You may have little indiſpoſitions, little wants; it is very pleaſant to have ſome money which you can apply either to render you comfortable, or to confer kindneſs upon others.—Dear mother, ſaid I, theſe conſiderations are not to be neglected, ſince you have the goodneſs to ſuggeſt them; there are others which touch me more, but there is no point of repugnance which I am not prepared to ſacrifice to you. The only favour I have to aſk of you, dear mother, is to take no ſteps till you have converſed with M. Manouri in my preſence —Nothing is more proper. Will you write to him yourſelf?——Juſt as you pleaſe, dear mother.—Write to him then; and that we may not be obliged to go over the ſubject a ſecond time, (for I am not fond of that kind of buſineſs, it teaſes me to death), write to him immediately.—I inſtantly got pen, ink and paper; I entreated M. Manouri to be ſo good as to take a journey to Arpajon, as ſoon as buſineſs would permit; that I again had need of his advice and aſſiſtance in an

affair

affair of ſome importance, &c. The council aſſembled, read and approved this letter, and it was diſpatched.

M. Manouri came a few days after. The Superior explained to him the queſtion. Without a moment's heſitation he aſſented to her opinion. My ſcruples were treated as abſurd. It was determined that the nuns of Longchamp ſhould be ſummoned next day. They were ſummoned accordingly; and in ſpite of all I could do, my name again appeared in memorials, in caſes, in public hearings, and that with details, inſinuations and falſehoods, and every kind of foul aſperſion that could render a cauſe unfavourable in the opinion of the Judges, and odious in the eyes of the world. But, Sir, is it really the privilege of advocates to calumniate as much as they pleaſe? Is there no juſtice to be obtained among them? Could I have foreſeen all the vexations which this ſuit was to involve, I proteſt to you that I would not have conſented to its being undertaken. They were careful to ſend to ſeveral nuns of our houſe the pieces which were publiſhed againſt me. Every moment they came to enquire into the details of horrible events, which had not the ſhadow of truth. The more I appeared ignorant, the more I was deemed guilty. Becauſe I explained nothing, and denied nothing, they believed it all to be true. They made oblique, but very offenſive obſervations. They ſhrugged their ſhoulders at my innocence. I wept, I was afflicted beyond meaſure.

But calamity never comes ſingle. The time of confeſſion arrived. I had already accuſed myſelf of the firſt careſſes which the Superior had beſtowed upon me, and the Director had moſt expreſsly prohibited me from yielding to them in future. But how is it poſſible to refuſe favours, which are attended

attended with the higheſt pleaſure to another on whom you are entirely dependant, and in which you yourſelf are not conſcious of any criminality?

The Director, having a conſpicuous part to perform in the ſequel of theſe memoirs, I conceive it will not be improper to acquaint you with his character.

He is a Cordelier, and his name is Father Lemoine. He is above forty years of age. He poſſeſſes one of the fineſt phyſiognomies in the world. It is mild, ſerene, open, ſprightly, agreeable, when he is not at pains to modify its appearance; but when he is anxious to adjuſt his countenance, his brow becomes wrinkled, he knits his eye-brows, fixes his eyes upon the ground, and infuſes an auſterity into his whole carriage. I don't know two men more different than Father Lemoine at the altar, and Father Lemoine in the parlour; and Father Lemoine in the parlour alone, and in company. Indeed this feature is common to the character of all religious perſons whatever. I have even frequently caught myſelf when going to the grate, ſtopping ſhort, adjuſting my veil, my cap, compoſing my countenance, my eyes, my mouth, my hands, my arms, my carriage, and aſſuming a borrowed modeſty and demeanour, which continued either longer or ſhorter, according to the perſons with whom I had to converſe. Father Lemoine is tall, handſome, gay, and extremely amiable. when he is eaſy; his elocution is admirable. In the houſe to which he belongs he has the reputation of a profound theologian; and in the world, that of a great preacher. His converſation is enchanting. He is a man poſſeſſed of an infinite variety of knowledge unconnected with his profeſſion. He has an exquiſite voice; he is ſkilled in muſic, hiſtory and languages. He is a Doctor of the Sorbonne.

Sorbonne. Although he is young, he has paſſed through all the principal dignities of his Order. I believe him to be free from intrigue and ambition; he is beloved by his aſſociates. He ſolicited the place of Superior of the houſe of Etampes as a tranquil ſituation, where he could apply himſelf without avocations to ſome ſtudies which he had begun, and he ſucceeded in his application. It is a point of great importance for a religious houſe to make a proper choice of a confeſſor. They ought to have as a director, a man of importance and diſtinction. Every exertion was made by the houſe of Arpajon to obtain Father Lemoine; and they obtained him, at leaſt in the capacity of extraordinary director.

The carriage belonging to the houſe was diſpatched for him on the eve of the grand feſtivals, and he came. It was entertaining to ſee the agitation which his expected arrival produced through the whole community; what joy it excited! how the nuns ſhut themſelves up! how they laboured to prepare themſelves for his examination! how they ſtudied to occupy him as long as poſſible.

It was on the eve of the feaſt of Pentecoſt that he was expected. I was uneaſy; the Superior obſerved it, and ſpoke to me on the ſubject. I did not conceal from her the cauſe of my anxiety: ſhe appeared ſtill more alarmed at the circumſtance than I was, although ſhe did every thing in her power to diſſemble her apprehenſion. She treated Father Lemoine as a fantaſtic character; ridiculed his ſcruples; aſked me if Father Lemoine knew more with regard to the innocence of her ſentiments and mine, than our own conſciences; and whether mine gave me any reproaches. I anſwered that it did not. Very well then, ſaid ſhe, I am your Superior, you are bound to obey me; and I command

mand you not to ſpeak to him of theſe fooliſh things. You need not go to confeſſion, if you have nothing but trifles to reveal.

Father Lemoine, however, arrived; and I was preparing for confeſſion while he was already occupied with the nuns who had been moſt forward to engage him. My turn was coming; when the Superior came to me, drew me aſide, and ſaid, Saint Suſan, I have reflected upon what you told me; return to your cell, I wiſh you not to go to confeſſion to day.—And why, dear mother? replied I.—To-morrow is a great day; it is the day of general communion: what thoughts do you imagine will be entertained of me, if I am the only perſon that does not approach the Holy Table?—No matter; let them ſay what they pleaſe, but you ſhall not go to confeſſion.—Dear mother, ſaid I, if you really love me, do not ſubject me to that mortification; I entreat it as a favour.—No, no; you will occaſion me ſome quarrel with that man, a circumſtance I am deſirous to avoid.—No, dear mother, I will cauſe you none.—Promiſe me then.....O, it is unneceſſary; to-morrow morning you will come to my chamber, and accuſe yourſelf to me; you have committed no fault for which I cannot aſſure you of reconciliation, and give you abſolution; you will then communicate with the reſt. Go.....—I then withdrew, and remained in my cell, ſad, uneaſy, penſive, not knowing what courſe to follow, whether I ſhould go to Father Lemoine, in ſpite of the Superior, whether I ſhould content myſelf with her abſolution next day, whether I ſhould perform my devotions with the reſt of the houſe, or abſtain from the Sacrament, in ſpite of all the obſervations that could be made. I was in this ſtate of mind when the Superior entered. She had been at confeſſion;

feſſion; and Father Lemoine had aſked why I had not appeared, and if I was ſick? I know not what anſwer ſhe returned; but the end of the buſineſs was, that he waited me at the confeſſional. Go then, ſaid ſhe, ſince it muſt be ſo, but aſſure me that you will be ſecret. I heſitated; ſhe inſiſted: Ha! fooliſh girl, ſaid ſhe, what harm would you have to be in concealing what there is no harm in committing?—And what harm is there, then, in telling it, replied I?—None, but there is inconvenience. Who knows the importance which this man may attach to it? Give me then an aſſurance ....I again heſitated, but at laſt I pledged myſelf to ſay nothing, if he did not queſtion me, and went to confeſs.

I confeſſed, and was ſilent upon the ſubject; but the director queſtioned me, and I diſſembled nothing. He propoſed a thouſand ſingular queſtions, of which I underſtand not a word, even at preſent, when I recall them to my remembrance. He treated me with indulgence; but he expreſſed himſelf againſt the Superior in terms that made me ſhudder; he called her baſe, profligate, perjured nun; corrupt pernicious woman; and enjoined me, under pain of being guilty of a deadly ſin, never to be alone with her, and to ſuffer none of her careſſes.—But, my father, ſhe is my Superior, ſhe may enter my apartment, and call me to hers, whenever ſhe pleaſes.—I know it, I know it, and it afflicts me beyond meaſure. Dear child, ſaid he, praiſed be God who has hitherto preſerved you! Without venturing to explain myſelf more clearly, from a fear of becoming an accomplice of your baſe Superior, and blaſting by the poiſoned breath, which, in ſpite of my care, might iſſue from my lips, a delicate flower, which is never preſerved freſh and without ſtain till your age but by the particular

particular protection of Providence, I command you to ſhun your Superior, to ſpurn her endearments, never to enter her chamber alone, to ſhut your door againſt her, eſpecially during the night, to quit your bed if ſhe enters your room, in ſpite of her oppoſition, to go into the paſſage, if neceſſary, to call for help, to deſcend, naked as you are, to the very foot of the altar, to fill the houſe with your cries, and to do every thing which the love of God and a hatred of guilt, the ſanctity of your ſituation, and the intereſt of your ſalvation could inſpire, were Satan himſelf to appear and aſſail you. Yes, my child, it is under this aſpect that I am conſtrained to repreſent your Superior. She is plunged in the abyſs of guilt; ſhe endeavours to precipitate you into it likewiſe; and perhaps you might already have been there along with her, if your innocence had not filled her with terror, and compelled her to ſtop.... Then raiſing his eyes to heaven; he exclaimed, My God, continue to protect this child.... Pronounce along with me, *Satana, vade retro; apage, Satana.* If this wretch examine you, tell her all, repeat to her my converſation; ſay to her, that it would have been better if ſhe had never been born, or that ſhe would by a violent death precipitate herſelf into the infernal gulph.—But, my father, replied I, you have but juſt now heard her confeſſion!—He returned me no anſwer; but breathing a profound ſigh, he laid one of his hands upon the arm of the confeſſional, upon which he leant his head in the attitude of a perſon penetrated with grief. He remained ſometime in this poſture. I knew not what to think; my knees ſhook under me; I was overwhelmed with an agitation and diſorder which it is impoſſible to deſcribe. I was in the ſituation of a traveller, who, covered with the ſhades of night,

night, wanders among precipices which he does not ſee, and who every moment is alarmed by the ſound of voices, crying, You are undone!.... Surveying me then with an air more tranquil, yet blended with anxiety and affection, he ſaid, Do you enjoy good health?—Yes, my father.—Would you be very much injured by the want of a night's ſleep?—No, my father.—Very well, you ſhall not go to bed this night. Accordingly, after you have taken your refreſhment, you will repair to church, proſtrate yourſelf at the feet of the altar, and paſs the night in prayer; you know not the danger to which you have been expoſed; you will return thanks to God for having preſerved you ſafe; and to-morrow you will approach the Holy Table with all the other nuns. The only penance I preſcribe for you, is to keep yourſelf at a diſtance from your Superior, and to repel her poiſoned careſſes. Go. I will alſo join my prayers with yours. What terrible uneaſineſs muſt your ſituation occaſion me! I am aware of all the conſequences which the advice I give you will produce, but it is a duty which I owe to you, and to myſelf. God is maſter, and we have but one law.

I recollect but very imperfectly, Sir, all that he ſaid. At preſent, when I compare his converſation, as I have detailed it to you, with the terrible impreſſion which it produced upon my mind, I diſcover no reſemblance, but this muſt be becauſe my account is mutilated and unconnected; becauſe many points are omitted which have eſcaped my memory; becauſe I annexed to them no diſtinct idea; and becauſe I could diſcover, and ſtill can perceive, no importance in circumſtances upon which he declaimed with the greateſt violence. For inſtance, what is there ſo extraordinary in the harpſichord ſcene? Are there not many perſons upon

upon whom muſic produces the moſt violent effects? I myſelf have been told, that certain airs, certain modulations, entirely changed my phyſiognomy: at theſe moments I was tranſported quite beyond myſelf; I knew not what I did; yet for all this I do not believe I was the leſs innocent. Why might not the caſe have been the ſame with my Superior, who, in ſpite of all her follies, and all her inequalities, was certainly a woman of the moſt exquiſite ſenſibility? She could not hear a ſtory at all affecting without melting into tears; when I recounted to her the events of my life, ſhe was touched to a degree that would have inſpired compaſſion. Why was not the commiſeration which ſhe teſtified, alſo urged againſt her as a crime? and the night ſcene, the event of which he waited to hear with ſuch deadly apprehenſion?... Certainly this man is too rigid.

I, nevertheleſs, punctually performed what he had preſcribed; the immediate conſequences of which he had undoubtedly foreſeen. As ſoon as I left the confeſſional I went and proſtrated myſelf at the feet of the altar; my head was diſtracted with terror; and there I remained till ſupper. The Superior, uneaſy about me, had ſent to call me, and ſhe was anſwered that I was engaged in prayer. Several times ſhe appeared at the door of the choir, but I affected not to perceive her. When the hour of ſupper arrived, I repaired to the refectory; I haſtily finiſhed ſupper and immediately returned to the church. I did not attend the evening's recreation, and at the time of retiring to bed, I did not return to my apartment. The Superior was not ignorant how I was engaged. The night was far advanced; ſilence reigned throughout the houſe, when ſhe came down to me. The image under which the Director had painted

her, recurred to my imagination, terror ſhook my limbs, I durſt not look at her. I believed I was to ſee her with hideous countenance, and all wrapped in flames. I ſaid to myſelf, *Satana, vade retro, apage Satana.* My God, preſerve me from this fiend.

She fell upon her knees, and after praying for ſometime, ſhe ſaid, Saint Suſan, what are you doing here?—Madam, you ſee.—Do you know what o'clock it is?—Yes, Madam.—Why did you not retire to your apartment at the appointed time? —Becauſe I am preparing to celebrate to-morrow, the great day.—Your deſign then was to paſs the night here.—Yes, Madam.—And who gave you permiſſion?—It was the Director's command.—The Director has no authority to impoſe any command contrary to the rules of the houſe; and I command you to go to bed.—Madam, it is the penance he has preſcribed.—You muſt ſubſtitute in its place ſome other performances.—That does not depend upon my choice.—Come, my child, come. The damps of the church during the night will affect your health; you will pray in your cell ....She then attempted to lay hold of my hand, but I ſhrunk back ſwiftly. You fly me! ſaid ſhe, —Yes, Madam, I fly you....My courage being in ſome meaſure reſtored by the ſanctity of the place, by the preſence of the divinity, by the innocence of my heart, I ventured to raiſe my eyes and look at her; but no ſooner had I perceived her, than I uttered a loud ſhriek, and run round the choir like a perſon diſtracted, crying, Begone from me Satan!....She did not follow; ſhe remained in her place; and ſtretching out her arms to me, ſhe ſaid, in a voice the moſt tender and moſt affecting, What is the matter with you? Whence ariſes this affright? Stop, I am not Satan, I am your

Superior

Superior and your friend....I ſtopped, and turned my head towards her, and perceived that I had been terrified by a whimſical appearance which my imagination had realized. She was placed in ſuch a poſition with regard to the lamp, which hung from the roof of the church, that the light only ſhone upon her face and the extremity of her hands, while the reſt remained in the ſhade, which diſplayed her in a very ſingular aſpect. Having a little regained my courage, I threw myſelf into a pew. She approached, and was about to ſeat herſelf in the neighbouring one, when I roſe and placed myſelf in the pew below. I travelled in this manner from pew to pew, till I reached the very laſt; I then ſtopped and conjured her to leave at leaſt one vacant place between us. With all my heart, ſaid ſhe. We then both ſat down, a ſingle pew ſeparating us. The Superior then, beginning the converſation, ſaid, May we know, Saint Suſan, whence ariſes this terror which my preſence inſpires?—Dear mother, it is not I, it is Father Lemoine. He repreſented the tenderneſs you entertain for me, and the endearments you beſtow, and in which I confeſs I comprehend nothing improper, under the moſt hideous colours. He commanded me to ſhun you, never to enter your apartment alone, to leave my cell, ſhould you come there. In ſhort, he has painted you to my mind as the infernal demon. I cannot tell you all he ſaid to me on that ſubject.—You have then ſpoken to him?—No, dear mother, but I could not avoid anſwering him.—So, I am then very frightful in your eyes?—No, my dear mother, it is impoſſible for me not to love you, not to feel all the value of your kindneſs, not to intreat you ſtill to continue it; but I will obey my Director.—You will come to ſee me no more?—I will not, dear

mother.—You will no more admit me to your cell?—I will not, dear mother.—You will reject my careſſes?—It will coſt me a ſtruggle to ſubmit to that injunction, for my natural temper is prone to endearments, and I love to be careſſed, but it muſt be. I promiſed to my Director that I would reject your endearments, and I confirmed it by an oath at the feet of the altar. Could I but deſcribe to you the manner in which he explained himſelf! He is a man of piety, a man of learning; and what intereſt could he have in pointing out to me dangers where they do not exiſt, in eſtranging the heart of a nun from the heart of her Superior? But, perhaps, in actions extremely innocent both upon your part and mine, he diſcovers a germ of ſecret corruption, which he imagines already developed in you, and which he fears leſt you ſhould develope in me. I will confeſs to you, that when I recollect the impreſſions which I have ſometimes experienced.... Upon my leaving you and returning to my cell, why, my dear mother, was I agitated and thoughtful? Why could I neither pray nor work? Whence aroſe that kind of liſtleſſneſs which I had never before felt? Why did I, who never ſleep in the day-time, feel myſelf overpowered with ſlumbers? I conceive that in you it was a contagious diſtemper, the effects of which began to be diſplayed in me; but Father Lemoine conſiders it in a very different light.—And in what light does he conſider the ſubject?—He conſiders it as attended with all the foulneſs and all the horrors of guilt; your deſtruction already conſummated, mine likewiſe contrived. I know not all the extent of the criminality which he diſcovers.—Poh, ſaid ſhe, this Father Lemoine is nothing but a viſionary; this is not the firſt prank of a ſimilar nature which he has played me. That

I attach

I attach myſelf to any one with a tender friendſhip is enough to ſet him going in order to turn her head. He had very nearly reduced that poor girl, Saint Thereſa, to a ſtate of madneſs. I begin to get tired of this nonſenſe, and I muſt rid myſelf of this troubleſome man. Beſides, he lives ten leagues off, and it is no ſmall trouble to prevail upon him to come, nor can he be had when we wiſh his attendance. But we will ſpeak of this more at our eaſe. Won't you go up ſtairs?—No, dear mother, I requeſt it of you as a favour, to allow me to paſs the night here. Were I to fail in the performance of this duty, I ſhould be afraid to partake of the ſacraments with the reſt of the community. But you, dear mother, do you intend to join the communion?—Doubtleſs.—Father Lemoine then has ſaid nothing to you?—No.—But how did that happen?—Becauſe I gave him no opportunity of ſpeaking to me. We only go to confeſſion to accuſe ourſelves of the ſins we have committed, and I do not conſider in that light, the tender affection I bear to a girl ſo amiable as Saint Suſan. If this is attended with any fault, it conſiſts in my centering in her alone, a ſentiment which ought to be diffuſed over all the members of the community; but it is not in my power to give the direction to my attachments. I cannot prevent myſelf from treating merit with diſtinction where it exiſts, and from clinging to it with the ardour of preference. I aſk pardon of God for it; and I cannot conceive how your Father Lemoine can diſcover that my damnation is ſealed in a partiality ſo natural, and againſt which it is ſo difficult to guard. I endeavour to contribute to the happineſs of all; but there are ſome whom I eſteem and whom I love more than others, becauſe they are more amiable and more eſtimable. Such then is

the whole of the crime I have committed with you: Saint Suſan, do you conſider it as very enormous? —No, dear mother.—Come, dear child, let each of us ſay a ſhort prayer, and then retire.—I entreated her anew to permit me to paſs the night in the church: ſhe conſented, upon condition that it was never to be repeated, and then withdrew.

I reflected upon what ſhe had ſaid to me. I ſupplicated the Almighty to illuminate my underſtanding; I weighed every circumſtance; and concluded, that upon the whole, although perſons were of the ſame ſex, the manner in which they teſtified their mutual friendſhip, might at leaſt be indecent; that Father Lemoine, a perſon of auſtere character, had perhaps exaggerated matters, but that the advice to ſhun the extreme familiarity of my Superior, by maintaining a great deal of reſerve, was very proper to be followed; and I accordingly laid down a reſolution to that effect.

In the morning, when the nuns came to the choir, they joined me in my place. They all ſat down at the Holy Table, with the Superior at their head. This circumſtance ſerved completely to convince me of her innocence, without, however, inducing me to ſwerve from the conduct I had reſolved to purſue. Beſides, I was very far from feeling towards her all that force of attraction which ſhe experienced in my favour. I could not forbear comparing her with my firſt Superior. What a difference! She had neither the ſame piety, nor the ſame gravity, nor the ſame dignity, nor the ſame fervour, nor the ſame judgement, nor the ſame taſte for order.

In the ſhort ſpace of a few days there occurred two very important events; the one was, gaining my proceſs againſt the nuns of Longchamp, who were condemned to pay to the houſe of Saint

Eutropa

Eutropa, where I now was, a penſion proportionate to my dowry; the other was, a change of the Director. It was the Superior herſelf who informed me of the laſt occurrence.

I no longer went to her cell unaccompanied, nor did ſhe viſit mine alone. She was always in queſt of me, but I took care to ſhun her; ſhe perceived the diſtance I obſerved to her, and reproached me with it. I know not what paſſed in her heart, but it muſt have been ſomething extraordinary. She roſe in the night, and walked in the corridors, particularly in mine; I heard her often paſs and repaſs, ſtop at my door, complain and ſigh; I was afraid, and I would cover myſelf over with my bed-clothes. In the day time, if I happened to be on the promenade, in the hall for working, or in the room for recreation, ſhe ſpent whole hours gazing on me, in ſuch a way as I could not obſerve her; ſhe watched every ſtep I took; if I went down ſtairs, I met her at the bottom of the ſtaircaſe; and when I went up again, ſhe was waiting at the top. One day ſhe ſtopped me; ſhe looked at me without ſaying a word; the tears ruſhed from her eyes; then, all of a ſudden, throwing herſelf upon the ground, and graſping my knee with her hands, ſhe ſaid to me: Cruel ſiſter, aſk my life, and I will give it you; but do not ſhun me, I cannot live without you....Her ſituation excited my compaſſion; her eyes were ſunk, her countenance was become pale and meagre. I recollected ſhe was my Superior; ſhe lay at my feet, with her head leaning againſt my knee, which ſhe held in her embrace; I ſtretched out my hands, ſhe ſeized them with ardour; ſhe kiſſed them, and then looked at me; kiſſed them a ſecond time, and looked at me again; I raiſed her up. She trembled, and could ſcarcely walk; I conducted her back to her

cell. When her door was opened, ſhe took me by the hand, and gently pulled me, to make me go in, but without either ſpeaking or looking at me. No, ſaid I, my dear mother, no; I am under promiſe to myſelf, and it will be better for us both that I keep it; I occupy too large a place in your heart, it is ſo much loſt to God, to whom you owe it all. —And does it become you to reproach me with it? ....—I endeavoured, while I was ſpeaking to her to diſengage my hand from hers.—You will not come in then? ſaid ſhe.—No, my dear mother, no. —You will not, Saint Suſan? but you do not know what will be the conſequence to me; no, you do not know it; I ſhall die....—Theſe laſt words inſpired me with a ſentiment quite oppoſite to that which ſhe ſuppoſed; I wreſted my hand from her, and ran off. She turned about, and followed me with her eyes for a little way, then returned into her cell, and, without ſhutting the door, uttered the moſt doleful lamentations. I heard them; they penetrated my ſoul; I was in doubt, for a moment, whether I ſhould remain apart, or whether I ſhould return; ſome repulſive emotions, however, determined me to remain, but not without feeling ſeverely the ſtate in which I left her; for I am naturally compaſſionate. I ſhut myſelf up in my cell; I found myſelf uneaſy; I was at a loſs how to employ myſelf; I took ſome turns in the apartment, diſtracted and vexed; I went out and returned; at laſt I went and knocked at my neighbour Saint Thereſa's door. She was in cloſe converſation with another young nun; I ſaid to her: Dear ſiſter, I am ſorry to interrupt you, but I pray you to excuſe me for one moment, I have a ſingle word to ſay to you....She followed me to my cell, and I told her that our mother Superior was in great diſtreſs; that I did not know what was the cauſe

cauſe of it; but that if ſhe would go and ſee her, perhaps ſhe might conſole her....She made no reply, but leaving her friend in her cell, ſhut her door, and ran to viſit the Superior.

This woman's malady grew worſe and worſe every day; ſhe became melancholy and ſerious; the gaiety which had inceſſantly prevailed from the time of my coming to the houſe, all of a ſudden diſappeared; every thing aſſumed an aſpect of auſterity; ſervice was performed with becoming dignity; ſtrangers were almoſt entirely excluded from the parlour; the nuns were prohibited from viſiting one another; religious exerciſes were reſumed with the moſt ſcrupulous exactneſs; there were no more meetings at the Superiors, no more afternoon parties; the moſt trifling faults were puniſhed with the utmoſt rigour; they ſtill ſometimes applied to me to procure a pardon, but I abſolutely refuſed to aſk it. The cauſe of this revolution was a ſecret to no one. The old nuns were little diſturbed by it, but it grieved the young ones, and made them regard me with an evil eye; as for myſelf, ſatisfied with my conduct, I was equally indifferent to their ill-humour and their reproaches.

This Superior, whom I could neither relieve nor refrain from pitying, paſſed ſucceſſively from melancholy to piety, and from piety to madneſs. To follow her through all the different ſtages of her courſe would involve me in an endleſs detail; I ſhall only mention, that in her firſt ſtate, ſhe ſometimes ſought for me, and ſometimes ſhunned me; at one time ſhe would treat us with her accuſtomed tenderneſs, at another time ſhe would exerciſe the utmoſt ſeverity; ſhe would call and then diſmiſs us; grant recreation, and in a moment after revoke the order; ſummon us to attend the

choir, and, when we were preparing to obey, by a ſecond toll of the bell, ſhut the whole ſociety up in their cells. It is difficult to conceive the reſtleſs life ſhe led; the day was paſſed in going to her cell, and returning; in taking up her breviary and laying it down; in going up and down ſtairs; in dropping, and lifting up her veil. The night was ſubject to almoſt as many interruptions as the day.

Some of the nuns applied to me, and gave me to underſtand, that by ſhewing a little more complaiſance and reſpect to the Superior, every thing would be reſtored to the wonted order, or rather the wonted diſorder; I anſwered them, ſorrowfully: I pity you, but tell me plainly what it is that I muſt do ?.....Some of them turned away, hanging down their heads, without making any reply; others gave me advice which it was impoſſible to reconcile with thoſe of my Director; I mean of him they had recalled, for we had not yet ſeen his ſucceſſor.

The Superior went out no more at night; ſhe paſſed whole weeks without going either to ſervice, to the choir, to the dining-room, or to the hall of recreation; ſhe lived ſhut up in her chamber; ſhe wandered in the corridors, or went down to the church; ſhe went about knocking at the doors of the nuns, and ſaying to them in a plaintive voice: Siſter ſuch a one, pray for me; Siſter ſuch another, pray for me.....A report ſpread, that ſhe was diſpoſed to make a general confeſſion.

One day, when I went down firſt to the church, I ſaw a piece of paper fixed to the curtain of the rail; I went and read it: "Dear ſiſters, you are "invited to pray for a nun who has ſtrayed from "the path of duty, and who wiſhes to return to "God...." I was tempted to tear it, but I let it remain. Some days after, there was another, with the

the following inſcription: "Dear ſiſters, you are "deſired to implore the mercy of God upon a "nun, who is ſenſible of her wanderings; they "are many..." Another day, there was another invitation: "Dear ſiſters, you are entreated to pray "God to deliver a nun from deſpair, who has "loſt all confidence in the divine mercy...."

Theſe invitations, in which were painted the cruel viciſſitudes of a mind in pain, threw me into a profound melancholy. While I was looking on ſome occaſion at one of theſe placards, I aſked myſelf what are theſe wanderings with which ſhe reproaches herſelf? whence proceed the pangs of this woman? what crimes can ſhe have committed? I recollected the exclamations of the Director; I recalled his expreſſions; I endeavoured to find out their meaning; I could not underſtand them; I became, as it were, abſorbed. Some of the nuns, who obſerved me, began to talk with one another about me; and, if I am not miſtaken, they conſidered me as threatened with the ſame terrors by which the Superior was afflicted.

This poor Superior never looked from under her veil; ſhe took no part in the affairs of the houſe; ſhe never ſpoke to any body, excepting the new Director, with whom ſhe had frequent interviews: he was a young Benedictine. I know not whether he enjoyed all the mortifications which ſhe practiſed; ſhe faſted three days in the week; ſhe macerated herſelf; ſhe heard ſervice in the inferior ſtalls; we paſſed her door in going to church; there we would find her proſtrated with her face upon the ground; ſhe refuſed to riſe in any perſon's preſence. At night, ſhe went down ſtairs barefooted and in her ſhift; if Saint Thereſa or I happened to meet her, ſhe returned, and put her face againſt the wall. One day, on going out of my

cell,

cell, I found her proſtrate, with her arms ſtretched out, and her face reclining upon the ground; ſhe ſaid to me, Advance, walk over me, tread upon me, I deſerve no better treatment.

In the courſe of the three months that ſhe laboured under this malady, the reſt of the communiry had conceived a ſtrong averſion to me. I ſhall not again enter into a detail of all the diſagreeable circumſtances which a nun, hated in her convent, is ſubjected to; you are already acquainted with them. I perceived my diſguſt at my ſituation returning. I communicated this diſguſt, and all my troubles to the new Director; his name was Don Morel; he was a man near forty, of a warm temper. He ſeemed to liſten to me with attention and with intereſt; he deſired to know the occurrences of my life; he made me enter into a moſt minute detail of my family, my inclinations, my character, the houſes in which I had lived, that in which I now was, and what had paſſad between me and the Superior. I told him all, without any concealment. He ſeemed to attach leſs importance to the conduct of the Superior than Father Lemoine did; he ſaid only a few words upon it, and that with apparent reluctance; he conſidered the matter as over; what affected him moſt were my ſecret diſpoſitions with reſpect to the religious life. In proportion as I opened myſelf to him, he returned my confidence by making ſimilar diſcloſures on his part; if I made confeſſion to him, he repoſed truſt in me; what he told me of his trouble had a perfect conformity to what I had experienced; he had entered into the religious ſtate from compulſion; he ſupported his condition with the ſame diſguſt, and had the ſame complainis againſt it as myſelf. But, my dear Siſter, added he, what can be done? there is only one reſource, namely, to render

render our lot as little diſtreſſing as we can. And then he gave me the ſame counſels that he followed; they were prudent; but he proceeded to remark that we cannot avoid chagrin, and all we can do is to bear up under it. Religious perſons are happy in proportion as they can make a merit before God of their ſufferings: when they can do this, they are matter of joy to them; they court mortifications above all things; the more bitter and frequent they are, the happier they find themſelves; they exchange preſent, for future felecity, and ſecure the latter by a voluntary ſacrificc of the former. After ſuffering much, they ſay to God, *Amplius, Domine;* More ſtill, Good Lord.... a prayer which God takes care to anſwer. But though we ſuffer the ſame pains with them, we cannot promiſe ourſelves the ſame recompence, becauſe we want the only thing which confers any value upon them, reſignation; it is a melancholy fact. Alas! how ſhall I inſpire you with that virtue in which you are deficient, and which I do not poſſeſs? Without this we are expoſed to deſtruction in the world to come, after being miſerable in the preſent. After living in penance, we ſhall as ſurely be damned, as thoſe who paſs through this life in the midſt of pleaſures; we ſubject ourſelves to mortification; they indulge in enjoyment, and in the end the ſame puniſhment awaits both. How miſerable the condition of a monk or nun, who has had no call to the religious life! it is ours however, and we cannot change it. They have loaded us with galling chains, which we are doomed to ſupport, without hope of breaking; let us try, my dear Siſter, to drag them. Go, I ſhall return, and ſee you again.

He returned in a few days after; I ſaw him in the parlour. The hiſtory of our lives, which we mutually

mutually diſcloſed, preſented an infinite number of circumſtances which formed between us ſo many points of contact, and of remonſtrance: he had been ſubjected to almoſt the ſame domeſtic and religious perſecutions that I had undergone. I did not imagine that the picture of his diſguſt was at all calculated to diſſipate mine; it produced this effect however in me, and I believe the communication of my diſguſt produced the ſame effect in him. Thus, from a reſemblance of character, united with a correſpondence in events, the more we reviewed ourſelves, the more we were pleaſed with each other; the hiſtory of his moments was the hiſtory of mine; the hiſtory of his ſentiments was the hiſtory of mine; the hiſtory of his heart was the hiſtory of mine.

After we were tired with ſpeaking about ourſelves, we converſed about others, particularly the Superior. The ſituation he held as a Director rendered him extremely reſerved: I diſcovered, however, from the tenor of his converſation, that the preſent temper of this woman could not laſt long, that ſhe was vainly ſtruggling with herſelf. Oh, that one of two things would be the conſequence! either that ſhe would revert to her former habits, or that ſhe would loſe her judgment. I had the ſtrongeſt curioſity to know more; he could eaſily have reſolved thoſe queſtions which I had never been able to anſwer myſelf, but I did not make free to interrogate him; I ventured only to aſk if he knew Father Lemoine?—Yes, ſaid he, he is a very deſerving man, very much ſo indeed.—We no longer ſee him as we uſed to do.—No? Can you tell me the reaſon?—I ſhould be ſorry if it tranſpired.—You may rely upon my diſcretion.—They have written againſt him, I believe, to the Archbiſhop.—And what could they ſay againſt him

him?—That he lived at too great a diſtance from the houſe; that they could not get him when he wanted; that his morality was too ſevere; that they had ſome reaſon to ſuſpect him of entertaining innovating ſentiments; and that he diſſeminated a factious ſpirit in the houſe, and eſtranged the minds of the nuns from their Superior.—And how do you come to know this?—I have it from himſelf.—You have ſeen him then?—Yes, I have ſeen him; he has ſpoken to me ſometimes about you.—What did he ſay?—That you was much to be pitied; that he could not conceive how you have been able to ſupport all the hardſhips you have undergone; that though he had only an opportunity of converſing with you once or twice, he did not believe that ever you would accommodate yourſelf to the religious life; that he had a mind.... Here he ſtopped ſhort; and I added, What had he a mind to do?—Don Morel replied, It is an affair of private confidence, which I am not at liberty to diſcloſe.... I did not inſiſt; I ſaid only, it is very true that it was Father Lemoine who made me eſtrange myſelf from my Superior.—He was right in ſo doing.—Why?—Siſter, replied he, with a ſerious air, follow his counſels, and remain ignorant, as long as you live, of the reaſon which dictated them.—But it appears to me that, if I knew the danger, I ſhould be more attentive in ſhunning it.—Perhaps the contrary might be the caſe.—You muſt have had a very bad opinion of me.—I have that opinion of your morals and of your innocence, which they naturally inſpire; but believe me, there is a fatal inſight which you cannot acquire without being corrupted by it. It is your innocence which has wrought upon your Superior; had you been better informed, ſhe would have reſpected you leſs.—I don't underſtand you.—So much

much the better.—But how can the familiarities and the careſſes of a woman be dangerous to one of her own ſex?—No reply on the part of Don Morel.—Am I not the ſame as when I came here?—Still no reply on the part of Don Morel.—Should I not have continued the ſame? Where then is the harm of loving her, of telling her ſo, and of giving her expreſſions of it? It is ſo pleaſant!—Very true, ſaid Don Morel, raiſing his eyes, which were fixed upon the ground, while I ſpoke, and caſting a look upon me.—And is this a malady frequent in convents? My poor Superior! into what a condition has ſhe fallen!—It is truly afflicting, and I am afraid ſhe will grow worſe and worſe. She was not made for her ſituation, and this is always the conſequence of it ſooner or later; when we oppoſe the general bent of nature, the conſtraint gives birth to ungovernable paſſions, which are the more violent, becauſe they are ill-founded; it is a ſort of madneſs.—Madneſs?—Yes, and it will increaſe.—And do you think that this fate awaits all thoſe who are bound to a ſtate to which they are not called?—Not all; there are ſome who die beforehand; there are others whoſe temper is ſo flexible, as in time to yield; and there are others who are ſupported for a conſiderable time, by vague uncertain hopes.—In what hopes can a nun indulge?—What hopes? at firſt they have that of reviling their vows.—And when that fails?—They hope that they will ſome day find the gates open; that mankind will renounce the evtravagance of entombing living victims in the flower of youth, and that convents will be aboliſhed; that the houſe will be burnt; that the walls of the cloiſter will fall; that ſome one will come to their aid. All theſe ſuppoſitions paſs in their brain, and they indulge them; while they are walking

walking in the garden, they look, without thinking of it, if the walls are very high; if they are in their cells, they try if they could force the bar of the railing; if there is a ſtreet under the windows, they fix their eyes upon it; if they hear any perſon paſs, their heart palpitates; they ſigh after a deliverer; if there is any tumult, the noiſe of which is heard in the houſe, they are eager with expectation; they reckon upon ſome diſtemper, which will render it neceſſary to call in a phyſician, or which will cauſe them to be ſent to a watering place.—True, very true, exclaimed I, you read the bottom of my heart; I have indulged, and I ſtill indulge in theſe illuſions.—And when they vaniſh upon reflection (for theſe ſalutary vapours which are the offſprings of the heart, and which cloud the underſtanding, are at intervals diſpelled) when they experience all the weight of miſery; they deteſt themſelves, they abhor thoſe about them, they utter cries and groans, and lamentations; they feel the approaches of deſpair. Then ſome run and throw themſelves at the feet of their Superior, ſeeking conſolation from her; others proſtrate themſelves in their cells, or before the altar, and invoke the aid of Heaven; others rend their clothes, and tear their hair; others go in queſt of a deep well, a high window, or a nooſe, and ſometimes they find the one or the other; others, after enduring torments for a long time, fall into a kind of ſtupidity and turn ſilly; others, who have more feeble and delicate organs, waſte away with languor; and there are others, whoſe whole ſyſtem is deranged, their imagination troubled, and who become furious. The happieſt are thoſe who experience a renewal of thoſe ſalutary illuſions, and who are flattered and conſoled by them, till their latter end; their life is a ſeries of alternate error

and

and deſpair.—The moſt unhappy, apparently, added I, with a deep ſigh, are thoſe who paſs through all theſe ſtates in ſucceſſion..... Ah! my father, how vexed I am at what you have told me!—Why?—I was unacquainted with what paſſed in my own mind; it is now laid open to me; and the illuſions with which I pleaſed myſelf, will now vaniſh more quickly than before.

I was preparing to continue, when another nun entered, a ſecond, a third, a fourth, a fifth, a ſixth, and I know not how many. The converſation became general. Some looked at the Director, others liſtened to him in ſilence and with downcaſt eyes. Several of them together propoſed queſtions to him, and all loudly extolled the wiſdom of his anſwers. Meanwhile I had retired into a corner, where I reſigned myſelf to a profound reverie. In the midſt of theſe converſations, in which all endeavoured to diſplay themſelves to the beſt advantage, and to fix the preference of the holy man by every accompliſhment they poſſeſſed, ſome one was heard ſlowly to approach, at intervals to ſtop and breath profound ſighs. They liſtened, they whiſpered to each other, It is ſhe, it is our Superior: they were then ſilent, and ſat down in a circle. It was ſhe in reality. She entered. Her veil reached down to her middle, her arms were croſſed upon her breaſt, and her head reclining. I was the firſt whom ſhe perceived. At this moment ſhe withdrew from under her veil, one of her hands with which ſhe covered her eyes, and turning herſelf a little to one ſide with the other, ſhe made a ſignal for us all to depart. We withdrew in ſilence, and ſhe remained alone with Don Morel.

I am aware, Sir, that you are about to conceive a bad opinion of me, but I am not aſhamed of what I have done, Why ſhould I bluſh to confeſs it? Beſides,

ſides, how could I ſuppreſs, in this recital, an event which gave riſe to ſeveral conſequences? Say then that my mind is of a very regular caſt: when the circumſtances relate are calculated to excite your eſteem, or increaſe your commiſeration, I may write well or ill; but I write with incredible eaſe and rapidity, my heart is gay, expreſſions come to me without effort, my tears flow ſweetly; I conceive that you are preſent, that I ſee you, and that you liſten to me. If on the contrary I am obliged to ſhow myſelf to you in an unfavourable aſpect, I think with difficulty, I want expreſſions, my pen moves ill, the character of my writing is affected by my ſituation, and I only continue becauſe I ſecretly flatter myſelf that you will not read thoſe paſſages. Of this deſcription is the following.

After all our ſiſters had retired...—Well then! what did you do?—You don't gueſs? No, you are too honeſt for that. I went down upon tiptoe, and ſoftly took my ſtation at the parlour door, to overhear what was ſaid. That is very bad, you will ſay.... Oh! as for that, agreed, it is very bad, ſo I ſaid to myſelf; and my agitation, the precaution I took to avoid obſervation, the heſitation with which I proceeded, the voice of my conſcience which every moment urged me to return, would not allow a doubt of it to remain. Curioſity however proved victorious, and I went on. But if it was bad to have privily overheard the converſation of two perſons, who believed themſelves alone, is it not ſtill worſe to report it to you? Here again is one of thoſe paſſages which I write, becauſe I flatter myſelf you will not read it. I know that this is not the caſe, but I muſt nevertheleſs endeavour to perſuade myſelf of its truth.

The firſt word I heard, after a conſiderable pauſe, made me ſhudder: it was, My father, I am damned....

damned.... I again collected my ſpirits. I continued to liſten; the veil which hitherto had concealed from me the danger I had undergone, was torn off. At this moment I heard myſelf called. I was obliged to go; I retired; yet, alas! I had already heard but too much. What a woman, Marquis! what an abominable woman!

Here the memoirs of Siſter Suſan are interrupted. What follows, are only memorandums of what ſhe probably meant to employ in the remainder of her narration. It appears that her Superior became mad; and to her unfortunate ſituation, the fragments which follow muſt be underſtood to refer.

After this confeſſion we enjoyed ſeveral days of ſerenity. Joy was reſtored to the community, and I received compliments upon the event, which I rejected with indignation.

She no longer ſhunned me; ſhe looked at me; nor did my preſence appear to cauſe her any trouble. I did every thing in my power to conceal the horror with which ſhe inſpired me, ſince, by a fatal curioſity, I had obtained a better knowledge of her character.

By and by ſhe became ſilent, and reſerved; ſhe ſaid nothing, but, Yes, and No. She took ſolitary walks; ſhe refuſed nouriſhment; her blood became inflamed; ſhe was ſeized with a fever, to which a delirium ſucceeded.

Alone in her bed ſhe ſaw me; ſhe ſpoke to me; ſhe invited me to approach; ſhe addreſſed me in terms the moſt tender. If ſhe heard any one walk paſt her chamber, ſhe exclaimed, It is ſhe paſſing, it is her ſtep, I recollect it well; call her in.... No, no, let her alone.

It is ſingular enough that ſhe was never once miſtaken, nor did ſhe ever take another me.

She

She would break out iuto loud fits of laughing, and next moment burſt into tears. Our ſiſters ſurrounded her in ſilence, and ſome of them wept along with her.

Suddenly ſhe would exclaim, I have not been at at church, I have not ſaid my prayers.... I wiſh to riſe out of bed; I wiſh to be dreſſed; let me be dreſſed.... If her requeſt was refuſed, ſhe added, Give me at leaſt my breviary.... They gave it her, ſhe opened it, turned over the leaves with her finger, and ſhe continued to turn over even after ſhe had got to the end of the book. All the while her eyes were diſtracted.

One night ſhe went down to the church alone. Some of the Siſters followed her. She proſtrated herſelf on the ſteps of the altar; ſhe groaned, ſighed, and prayed aloud, went out, returned, and ſaid, Go bring her, ſhe is a ſoul ſo pure! ſhe is a creature ſo innocent!.... If ſhe but joined her prayers to mine.... Then addreſſing herſelf to the whole community, and turning to the empty benches, ſhe cried, Go, go, all of you, let her remain alone with me. You are not worthy to approach her; were your voices to mingle with hers, your profane incenſe would corrupt before God, the purity of hers. Begone, begone.... Then ſhe exhorted me to aſk of God aſſiſtance and pardon. She thought ſhe ſaw God. The heavens appeared to her to be divided by gleams of lightening, to open aſunder and thunder over her head. Angels in fury deſcended. She trembled at the looks of the divinity. She flew round the church, precipitated herſelf into the obſcure corners; ſhe implored mercy; ſhe fixed her face upon the ground; in this poſition ſhe fell aſleep; the cold damp of the place affected her; ſhe was carried back to her cell as dead.

In

In the morning ſhe knew nothing of the dreadful ſcene that had taken place the preceding night. She would ſay, Where are our ſiſters? I no longer ſee any body; I am left alone in this houſe; they have all abandoned me, and Saint Thereſa too: they have done well. Since Saint Suſan is gone, I may venture out, I ſhall be in no danger of meeting her.... Ah! were I to meet her! but ſhe is gone; is ſhe not? Is it not ſo, is ſhe not gone?..!.! Happy is the houſe in which ſhe reſides? She will tell all to her new Superior. what will they think of me?.... Is Saint Thereſa dead? I heard the death knell all night long.... Poor girl! ſhe is ruined for ever: it is I, it is I who have done it.... One day I ſhall be confronted with her. What ſhall I ſay to her? what ſhall I anſwer her?.... Oh! unhappy girl! Oh! woe is me!

At other times ſhe would ſay, Are our Siſters returned? Tell them that I am very ill.... Raiſe up my pillow... Unlace me.... I feel ſomething here which weighs me down...+. My head is on fire.... Take off my cap.... I wiſh to waſh my hands.... Bring me water, pour, pour on ſtill. They are white, but the foul ſpots of the ſoul cannot be wiped away.... I wiſh I were dead. I wiſh I had never been born, I then had never ſeen her.

One morning ſhe was diſcovered with her feet bare, in her ſhirt, her hair diſhevelled, howling, foaming, and running round her cell, her hands upon her ears, her eyes ſhut, and her body ſqueezed againſt the wall.... Away from that abyſs! hear you thoſe cries? Theſe are the infernal regions; I ſee the flames iſſuing from that profound abyſs; from the middle of theſe raging fires I hear a confuſed ſound of voices calling on me.... My God, have pity upon me!.... Go, quick, ring the bell, aſſemble

aſſemble the community; tell them to pray for me, I will pray alſo.... But it is hardly day yet, our ſiſters are aſleep.... All night long I have never cloſed an eye; I wiſh to ſleep too, but cannot

One of the Siſters ſaid to her, Madam, ſome ſorrow labours in your breaſt, entruſt it to me, it will perhaps relieve you.—Siſter Agatha, attend, come near me.... nearer... nearer ſtill... Nobody muſt overhear us. I will diſcloſe to you all, but keep my ſecret... You have ſeen her?—Whom, Madam?—Is it not true that nobody has a ſweetneſs like her? How elegantly ſhe walks! what grace! what nobleneſs! what modeſty!... Go to her, tell her.... Alas! no, don't go, ſay nothing to her... You cannot approach her, the angels of heaven guard her, they watch round her; I have ſeen them, you will ſee them, and they will terrify you like me. Stop.... If you go, what can you ſay to her? Deviſe ſomething at which ſhe will not bluſh... But, Madam, were you to conſult our Director. Yes, but, yes.... No, no, I know what he will tell me, I have already heard it all.... Of what am I to converſe with him?.... O! could I loſe all memory!.... Could I ſink into annihilation and be born again!.... Do not call the Director; I would rather you read to me the paſſion of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Read.... I begin to reſpire. .. One drop of blood will ſuffice to p[illegible]rify me.... See, it ſprings bubbling from [illegible]ſide.... Apply that ſacred wound to my head.... His blood ſtreams over me, but does not remain... I am undone!.... Take away that crucifix.... Bring it back.... It was brought back to her; ſhe preſſed it between her hands, ſhe kiſſed it all over, and added, Theſe are her eyes, that is her mouth; when am I to ſee her again?... Siſter Agatha, tell her that I love her; paint to her faithfully my ſituation, tell her that I am dying.

She

She was bled, ſhe was bathed; but remedies ſeemed only to increaſe her diſtemper. I durſt not attempt to deſcribe to you all the indecent actions ſhe committed, all the obſcene obſervations which eſcaped her during her delirium. Every moment ſhe raiſed her hand to her brow to drive away tormenting ideas, images, I know not what images! She plunged her head into the bed, and covered her face with the ſheets. It is the tempter! would ſhe exclaim: what fantaſtic form has he aſſumed! Take ſome holy water; throw ſome holy water over me.... Stop, ſtop, he is now gone.

It was very ſoon found neceſſary to confine her; but her priſon was not ſo well guarded as to prevent her one day making her eſcape. She had torn her clothes to pieces; all naked, ſhe flew through the paſſages, except that two pieces of the broken cords, wtth which ſhe had been bound, hung from her arms; ſhe cried, I am your Superior; you have all taken the oath of obedience to me, and I ſhall be obeyed. Wretches! you have thrown me into priſon; this then is the reward of my kindneſs! you abuſe me becauſe I am too good; I ſhall be ſo no more.... Fire!... murder!.... thieves!.... help!... Aſſiſt me, St. Thereſa; aſſiſt me, Saint Suſan.... Meanwhile, ſhe was ſeized and taken back to priſon. She then ſaid, You are right, you are right; alas! I have loſt my reaſon, I feel that I have.

Sometimes ſhe ſeemed haunted with the images of different puniſhments; ſhe thought ſhe ſaw women with cords round their neck, and their hands tied behind their backs, ſome with torches in their hands. She imagined herſelf in company with thoſe who were doing penance; ſhe thought herſelf on the way to the place of execution, and addreſſed the executioner: I have deſerved my fate, but try and put me quickly out of pain....

I now

I now tell you nothing, Sir, but what is exactly true; and every circumſtance does not occur to my recollection, or I ſhould bluſh to pollute my pages with the recital.

After living ſeveral months in this deplorable ſituation, ſhe died. What a frightful death, Marquis! I ſaw her! I ſaw her, the terrible picture of deſpair and guilt in her laſt moments. She thought herſelf ſurrounded by infernal ſpirits, that waited to catch her ſoul. She exclaimed, in a voice almoſt ſuffocated: There they are! ſee there!.... And oppoſing to them on the right and left, a crucifix which ſhe held in her hand, ſhe howled, ſhe cried, My God!.... My God!.... Siſter Thereſa very ſoon followed her; and we received another Superior advanced in years, full of ill-nature and ſuperſtition.

I was accuſed of having practiſed ſorcery upon her predeceſſor; ſhe believed the charge, and my vexations were renewed. The new Director was equally tormented by his Superiors, and perſuaded me to elope from the houſe.

The plan of my flight was arranged. I repaired to the garden between eleven and twelve at night. Ropes were thrown over the wall, which I fixed round me; they broke, and I fell to the ground. The ſkin of my legs was torn, and I received a violent contuſion on the back. After a ſecond and a third attempt, I reached the top of the wall. deſcended; but how great was my ſurpriſe, when, inſtead of a poſt-chaiſe, in which I hoped to be received, I found a wretched public coach! I was now upon the road to Paris, with a young Benedictine. I very ſoon perceived, by the indecent tone which he aſſumed, and the liberties which he indulged, that none of the conditions which had been ſtipulated with me, would be obſerved. A

this moment I regretted my cell, and felt all the horrors of my ſituation.

Here I will paint the ſcene which took place in the coach. What a dreadful ſcene! what a profligate man! I cried out; the coachman came to my aſſiſtace; a violent brawl enſued between the coachman and the monk.

I arrived at Paris. The carriage ſtopped in a little ſtreet, at a little narrow door, which opened into a obſcure dirty alley. The miſtreſs of the apartments came to meet me, and inſtalled me in the higheſt ſtory, in a little room, which contained hardly even neceſſary articles of furniture. I received a viſit from the woman who occupied the firſt floor. You are young, Mademoiſelle, you muſt needs grow melancholy for want of ſociety. Come down ſtairs to my apartments, where you will find an agreeable company, both of gentlemen and ladies; all of them not indeed ſo handſome, but almoſt as young as yourſelf. We talk, we play, we ſing, we dance, we combine all kinds of amuſements. Though you make all the gentlemen in love with you, I can aſſure you, that our ladies will neither be jealous nor offended. Come, Mademoiſelle.... This woman was ſomewhat advanced in life, her voice was ſweet, and her converſation extremely inſinuating.

I paſſed a fortnight in this houſe, expoſed to all the importunity of my perfidious raviſher, and to all the tumultuous ſcenes of a ſuſpicious place, watching every moment an opportunity to eſcape.

One day, I at laſt found the means of putting my reſolution in practice. Night was far advanced. Had I been in the neighbourhood of my convent, I ſhould have returned to it. I ran, without knowing where I went. I was ſtopped by ſome men; terror ſeized me. Overpowered by fatigue, I

ſunk

ſunk down in a ſwoon upon the threſhold of a Tallow-chandler's ſhop. They adminiſtered aſſiſtance to me; and when I recovered my ſenſes, I found myſelf ſtretched upon a bed, ſurrounded by a number of people. They aſked me who I was, and I know not what anſwer I returned. They gave me the ſervant girl of the houſe to conduct me; I took her arm, and we walked on. We had already gone a conſiderable way, when the girl obſerved to me, Mademoiſelle, you know ſurely where we are going?—No, my child; to the hoſpital, I believe,—To the hoſpital! have you no houſe to go to?—Alas! no.—What have you done to be turned out of doors at this time of night? but we are now at the gate of the hoſpital of St. Catherine; let us try if we can procure admittance. At all events, be under no apprehenſion, you ſhall not remain in the ſtreets, you ſhall ſhare my bed.

I returned to the Tallow-chandler's. How great was the terror of the ſervant-girl when ſhe ſaw the ſkin ſtripped off my legs, by the fall I received in making my eſcape from the convent! I paſſed the night in that houſe. The following evening I returned to the hoſpital of St. Catherine. There I remained three days; at the end of which, I received intimation, that I muſt either apply to the hoſpital general, or take the firſt ſituation that ſhould offer.

What dangers did I encounter in the hoſpital of St. Catherine, both from men and women! for it is here, as I have ſince been informed, that the rakes and women of the town go to provide themſelves. The apprehenſion of miſery gave no ſtrength to the coarſe attempts of ſeduction, to which I was expoſed. I ſold my clothes, and ſupplied myſelf with others more ſuitable to my ſituation.

I entered into the ſervice of a laundreſs, with whom I at preſent reſide. I receive linen which I iron. My day's work is ſevere. I am ill fed, ill lodged, and ſleep on a wretched bed; but to make amends, I am treated with humanity. The huſband is coachman in a family. The wife is a little haſty, but, in other reſpects, a good woman. I ſhould be ſufficiently content with my ſituation, could I hope to enjoy it unmoleſted.

I have been informed that the police laid hold of my raviſher, and ſent him back to his Superiors. Poor wretch! he is more to be pitied than me. His atttempt made a noiſe; and you cannot conceive with what cruelty faults attended with notoriety, are puniſhed in religious houſes. A dungeon will be his abode for the reſt of his life, and this too is the fate which awaits me if I am retaken; but he will live longer in that ſituation than I ſhould.

The pain of my fall is extremely ſevere, my legs are ſwelled, and I cannot walk a ſtep. I work ſitting, for I am unable to ſupport myſelf ſtanding. I yet dread the moment of my cure. What pretence ſhall I then have for not going out, and to what dangers muſt I expoſe myſelf by appearing in public? Happily, however, I have ſtill ſome time before me. My relations, who can entertain no doubt of my being at Paris, are certainly employed in making every poſſible ſearch. I had reſolved to ſend for M. Manouri to my garret, to aſk and to follow his advice; but he was no more.

It ſeems that my eſcape is public, and this is what I expected. One of my companions ſpoke of it to me yeſterday, adding the moſt odious circumſtances, and reflections the moſt afflicting. Fortunately, ſhe was hanging up the wet linen on cords, with her back to the lamp, and did not perceive

ceive my agitation. My miſtreſs, however, remarking that I wept, ſaid, Mary, what is the matter with you?—Nothing, replied I.—What then, added ſhe, are you fooliſh enough to feel ſo much pity for a wicked nun, deſtitute of morals and religion, who fell in love with a raſcal of a monk, with whom ſhe eloped from her convent? you muſt needs be of a very compaſſionate diſpoſition indeed. She had nothing to do but eat, drink, ſay her prayers, and ſleep. She was very well where ſhe was; why did ſhe not keep her ſituation? if ſhe had only been ducked three or four times in the river in this weather, that would ſoon have reconciled her to her ſtate....To this I anſwered, That people knew little of any difficulties but their own; but this obſervation had better been ſpared, and ſhe would not have added as ſhe did, Fie! ſhe is a ſlut whom God will puniſh....At this remark I leant upon the table, and remained in that poſture till my miſtreſs ſaid, But, Mary, what are you dreaming of then? while you ſleep there, the work ſtands ſtill.

I live in continual alarms. At the leaſt noiſe I hear in the houſe, upon the ſtair-caſe, in the ſtreet, I am ſeized with terror, I tremble like a leaf, my knees refuſe their ſupport, and my work drops from my hands. I paſs almoſt all my nights without cloſing an eye; and if I ſleep, my ſlumbers are broken. I ſpeak, I call, I cry out; and I cannot conceive how the people with whom I live, have not yet divined the myſtery.

I never had the ſpirit of the cloiſter, as my gait ſufficiently ſhows; but in the convent I had accuſtomed myſelf to certain obſervances, which I repeat mechanically. For inſtance, if the clock ſtrikes, I make the ſign of the croſs, or kneel down. If any one knock at the door, I ſay *Ave*. If any

one aſk me a queſtion, I always return an anſwer which concludes with a Yes or No, dear mother, or my ſiſter. If a ſtranger come in, I fold my arms over my breaſt, and, inſtead of a curteſy, I bend forwards. My companions laugh, and think I amuſe myſelf in counterfeiting the nun; but it is impoſſible that their miſtake can continue; my thoughtleſsneſs will betray me, and I ſhall be undone.

Haſten, Sir, to afford me relief. Doubtleſs you will ſay, tell me what it is in my power to do for you. My ambition is not great; it is this: I ſhould wiſh for the ſituation of chamber-maid or houſekeeper, or even common ſervant; provided I live unknown in the country, in ſome ſequeſtered province, in the family of reſpectable people who ſee little company. The wages are no object of conſideration. Security, repoſe, bread and water, are all I deſire. Be aſſured that my employers will be perfectly ſatisfied with my ſervice. In the houſe of my father I learnt to work, in the convent to obey. I am young, of a very gentle character. When my legs are cured, I ſhall have more ſtrength than will be ſufficient for the employment. I can ſew, ſpin, embroider, and waſh; when I lived in the world I uſed to make up my own lace, and I ſhall ſoon recover my former dexterity. I am not aukward at any thing, and there is nothing to which I cannot demean myſelf. I have ſome voice, I am acquainted with muſic, and I can play upon the harpſichord, in ſuch a manner as to amuſe any mother who has a taſte for it; and I could even give ſome leſſons to her children. But I ſhould be afraid of being betrayed by theſe marks of a ſyſtematic education. If it was neceſſary to learn to dreſs hair, I poſſeſs taſte, I could take a maſter, and ſoon acquire this little qualification....

A tolerable

A tolerable ſituation, Sir, if poſſible, or indeed a place of any kind, is all that I deſire, and I wiſh for nothing more. You may anſwer for the purity of my morals in ſpite of appearances; I feel their influence, I feel alſo that of piety. Ah! Sir, all my calamities had been over, and I ſhould have had nothing to fear from man, if God had not arreſted my deſign. How often have I viſited that deep well at the bottom of the garden belonging to the houſe! If I did not plunge myſelf into it, it was becauſe I was not left perfectly at liberty. I know not what is the deſtiny reſerved for me, but if I am compelled again to return to any convent whatever, I will not anſwer for myſelf; there are wells to be found every where. Have pity upon me, Sir, and do not, by neglecting my application, lay the foundation in your own breaſt, of long and bitter regret.

P. S. I am overwhelmed with fatigue, I am ſurrounded with terror, and repoſe flies from me. Theſe Memoirs, at firſt haſtily written, I have ſubmitted to a ſecond peruſal, when my mind was more collected; and I have diſcovered, that without the ſmalleſt intention, I have in truth, in every line, deſcribed myſelf as wretched as I really was, but much more amiable than I really am. Might the reaſon of this be, that we believe men to be leſs ſenſible to the picture of our ſufferings, than to the image of our charms; and that we conceive it to be a more promiſing undertaking to ſeduce their paſſions, than to touch their feelings? I am very little acquainted with them, and I have not ſtudied myſelf ſufficiently to diſcover. Yet, if the Marquis, who is allowed to poſſeſs the moſt delicate feelings, ſhould imagine that I addreſs myſelf, not to his benevolence, but to his vice, what would he think of me? This reflection renders me uneaſy.

In truth, it were very wrong to impute to me perſonally a natural propenſity common to my whole ſex. I am a woman, perhaps a coquette for aught I know, but it is naturally, and without artifice.

EXTRACT

EXTRACT

FROM THE

LITERARY CORRESPONDENCE

OF M***.

1770.

THE Nun of M. De la Harpe has awaked my conſcience, which has ſlept for ten years, by recalling to my recollection a horrible conſpiracy of which I was the ſoul, carried on in concert with M. Diderot, and two or three other Gentlemen of this ſtamp, our intimate friends. It is not yet too late to make confeſſion, and, in this holy time of Lent, to endeavour to obtain remiſſion of his offence, along with my other ſins, and drown all in the unfathomable well of divine mercy.

The year 1760 is diſtinguiſhed in the calendars of the Pariſian cockneys by the ſudden and extraordinary reputation of Ramponeau, and the comedy of the *Philoſophers*, performed in conſequence of high authority, upon the Theatre of the French Comedy. Of all this undertaking, there now remains only a recollection of the moſt profound contempt for Paliſſot, the author of this wonderful rhapſody, a feeling however which none of his protectors were diſpoſed to ſhare. Perſons of the higheſt rank, while they favoured the attempt, thought themſelves obliged in public to defend themſelves from the imputation of ſuch an under-

ſtanding, as from a ſtain of diſhonour. While all Paris was occupied with this piece of ſcandal, M. Diderot, whom the rogue of a French Ariſtophanes had choſen for his Socrates, was the only perſon to whom it gave no concern. But, what was our employment! Would to God it had been innocent! We had long been attached, by the bonds of the moſt tender friendſhip, to the Marquis de Croiſmare, formerly an officer in the King's regiment, retired from ſervice, and one of the moſt amiable men in this country. He is nearly of the age of M. de Voltaire; and like that immortal character, he preſerves a youthful vigour of mind, with a grace, a ſprightlineſs, a combination of faſcinating qualities, which for me poſſeſs a reliſh, the poignancy of which is never blunted. It may be ſaid of him, that he is one of thoſe amiable men, the caſt and the model of which are only to be found in France, although amiable and repulſive qualities are alike common to every country upon earth. I do not here allude to the diſpoſitions of the heart, the elevation of ſentiment, that ſtrict and delicate probity which render M. de Croiſmare as reſpectable as he is dear to his friends. I ſpeak only of the endowments of his mind. An imagination ardent and ſprightly, an original turn of mind, opinions which only ſtop at a certain point, and which he alternately adopts or proſcribes, a playfulneſs of humour, always regulated by propriety, an incredible activity of mind, which, combined with an idle life, and the multiplicity of the reſources of Paris, hurries him to the moſt different and diſſimilar employments, has created for him, wants which no man ever before imagined, and ſuggeſted means equally extraordinary for their gratification. This temper of conſequence gives riſe to an infinite ſucceſſion of enjoyments. Such are a part of the elements

elements which compoſe the being of M. de Croiſmare, denominated by his friends, the charming Marquis by excellence, as they called the Abbé Galiani, the charming Abbé. M. Diderot, comparing his own ſimplicity of good-nature, with the acute turn of the Marquis de Croiſmare, ſometimes told him, *Your wit is like the flame of ſpirit of wine, gentle and volatile, which ſpreads lambent over my fleece, but without ever burning it.*

This charming Marquis had left us at the beginning of the year 1759, to go to his eſtates in Normandy, near Caen. He had promiſed us to ſtay only the time neceſſary to put his affairs in order, but his abſence was inſenſibly prolonged. He had collected all his children to that ſpot; he was very fond of his curate; he had abandoned himſelf to a paſſion for gardening; and as an imagination ſo lively as his required ſome real or imaginary objects of attachment, he had all at once plunged into the moſt ardent devotion. In ſpite of this, he ſtill loved us all very tenderly; but probably we never ſhould have ſeen him again at Paris, if he had not loſt his two ſons in ſucceſſion. This event reſtored him to us at the end of about four years, after an abſence of more than eight. His devotion, like every thing elſe, evaporated in the air of Paris, and he is at this moment more amiable than ever.

As we felt his loſs very keenly, in 1760, after having ſupported it fifteen months, we deliberated on the means of inducing him to return to Paris. We recollected, that ſome time before his departure, much converſation, and a great deal of intereſt, had been excited in the world concerning a nun, who appealed judicially againſt her vows, into which ſhe had been forced by her parents. This unfortunate recluſe intereſted the Marquis to ſuch a degree, that without having ſeen her, without knowing

knowing her name, without even previouſly aſcertaining the truth of the facts, he went, and ſolicited in her favour all the counſellors of the great chamber of the Parliament of Paris. In ſpite of this generous interceſſion, the nun, by I know not what misfortune, loſt her cauſe, and her vows were adjudged valid. In recalling the whole of this adventure to our minds, we reſolved to revive it to our own advantage. We took it for granted, that this nun had been ſo fortunate as to eſcape from her convent; and, in conſequence, we made her write to the Marquis de Croiſmare, to entreat aſſiſtance and protection. We did not deſpair of ſeeing him arrive in all haſte to fly to the aſſiſtance of his nun; or, even had he gueſſed our knavery at the firſt glance, we were preparing materials for mirth. This remarkable piece of waggery took quite a different turn, as you will ſee by the correſpondence which I am about to ſubmit to your peruſal, between the pretended nun, and the honeſt and charming Marquis de Croiſmare, who never ſuſpected for a moment the treachery of which we were guilty. It is this treachery which we have always had upon our conſciences. We then employed ourſelves at our ſuppers, amid loud burſts of laughter, in compoſing the letters which were to make our good Marquis weep; and at theſe meetings we alſo read, with the ſame expreſſions of mirth, the virtuous anſwers which were returned by this generous and worthy friend. When we perceived, however, that the fortune of our unfortunate heroine began to intereſt too deeply her tender benefactor, we adopted the expedient of taking her off by death, as you may remark, preferring the uneaſineſs which he would feel upon this event, to the certain danger of inflaming his imagination, by keeping her longer alive. After his

his return to Paris, we confeſſed to him the whole circumſtance of this iniquitous conſpiracy. He laughed, as you may conceive. at the trick; and the misfortune of the poor nun ſerved only to ſtrengthen the bonds of friendſhip among thoſe ſhe left behind. One circumſtance no leſs ſingular, is, that the imagination of our friend in Normandy was heated by this pleaſantry; that of Diderot, on his part, was no leſs ardently inflamed. He began to write, in detail, the whole hiſtory of our nun. Had he completed his work, he would have wrought it up into one of the moſt juſt, the moſt intereſting, and moſt pathetic romances that ever exiſted. It was impoſſible to read a ſingle page of it, without being melted into tears: yet, as far as I recollect, it contained no mixture of love. It was a work of genius, which breathed the fervid imagination of its author. It was a performance too of public and general utility; for it was the moſt ſevere ſatire upon cloiſters ever compoſed. It was the more dangerous, becauſe it only ſeemed to ſpeak of them with praiſe. The devotion of our young nun was angelic; ſhe ever preſerved in her ſimple and tender heart, the moſt ſincere reverence for every thing ſhe had been taught to reſpect. But this romance never exiſted, except in detached ſhreds, and in that ſtate has continued, as well as an infinite number of other works, of one of the fineſt geniuſes that France ever produced; who would have rendered himſelf immortal by a number of maſterly performances, had he ever poſſeſſed the diſpoſition to be avaricious of his time, inſtead of reſigning it to all the thoughtleſs people in Paris, whom I ſummon to appear at the laſt judgment, to anſwer before God and men, for the injury of which they were thus the authors.

The

The correſpondence you are about to peruſe, and our repentance, are all that remain of our poor unfortunate nun. You will pleaſe to remember, that all her letters, as well as of the lady by whom ſhe was concealed, were fabricated by us ſons of Belial; and that all thoſe of her generous protector are genuine, and were written with pure ſincerity.

Note of the Nun, to M. the Count de Croiſmare, Governor of the Royal Military Academy.

An unfortunate woman, in whom the Marquis de Croiſmare took an intereſt three years ago, when he lived near the Academy of Muſic, is informed that he now reſides in the Military Academy. She ſends to him upon the preſent occaſion, to know if ſhe ſtill may reckon upon his kindneſs, as ſhe is now more to be pitied than ever.

A few words in anſwer to this application, if convenient, would be conſidered as a favour. Her ſituation is urgent; and it is of importance that the bearer of this note ſhould be ignorant of its purport.

Anſwer.

That the author of the note laboured under a miſtake, and that the Marquis de Croiſmare alluded to, was at preſent at Caen.

This note was in the hand-writing of a young perſon whom we employed in the whole courſe of this correſpondence. A porter carried it to the Military

Military Academy, and brought back the verbal anſwer. This preliminary ſtep was judged neceſſary, for ſeveral good reaſons. The nun appeared, to confound the two couſins, and to be unacquainted with the orthography of their name. By this means, ſhe very naturally learnt that her protector was at Caen. It was very probable, that the Governor of the Miltary Academy would avail himſelf of this opportunity to paſs a jeſt on his couſin, and ſend him the note, which gave a great appearance of reality to our virtuous heroine. The Governor, a very amiable man, like all who bear his name, was diſſatisfied with the abſence of his couſin, as well as ourſelves; and we hoped to enliſt him in the number of our accomplices. After his anſwer, the nun wrote to Caen.

Letter of the Nun to M. the Marquis de Croiſmare, at Caen.

SIR,

I do not know to whom I write; but, in the diſtreſſing ſituation in which I am placed, it is you whom I addreſs. If I have not been miſinformed at the Military Academy, and if you are indeed the generous Marquis of whom I am in ſearch, I will thank God. If you are not, I know not what I ſhall do. But I feel myſelf encouraged by the name you bear. I hope you will lend your aſſiſtance to an unfortunate perſon, whom you, Sir, or ſome other M. de Croiſmare, not he of the military academy, ſupported by your ſolicitations in an attempt ſhe made three years ago, to obtain her enlargement from a perpetual priſon, to which ſhe had been condemned by the rigour of her parents.

Deſpair

Deſpair has driven me to a ſecond ſtep, of which doubtleſs you will have heard. I have eloped from my convent. I was unable any longer to ſupport my ſufferings, and there only remained this method, or a ſtill greater crime, to procure me that liberty, which I hoped from the juſtice of the laws.

If you were formerly my protector, Sir, let my preſent ſituation touch your heart, and awaken within you ſome feeling of compaſſion! Perhaps you will think me indiſcreet, in thus applying to a perſon unknown, in circumſtances like mine. Alas! Sir, did you know the deſolate ſtate to which I am reduced, could you form any idea of the inhumanity with which faults that have excited public attention, are puniſhed in religious houſes, you would excuſe me. But your ſoul is full of ſenſibility, and you would one day dread to recall to your memory an innocent creature, thrown for the remainder of her life into the diſmal receſſes of a dungeon. Relieve me, Sir, relieve me. The kind of ſervice which I hope from you, and which it is eaſier for you to grant me in the country than in Paris, is this: To procure, me either in your own houſe, or among your acquaintances, at Caen, or elſewhere, the ſituation of chamber-maid, or houſe-keeper, or even common ſervant. Provided I am unknown, in the family of reſpectable people, who live retired, wages form no conſideration. Let me have only bread and water, but at the ſame time, let me be ſecure from purſuit. You may be aſſured that my employers will have no reaſon to be diſſatisfied with my ſervice. In the houſe of my parents, I learnt to work, in the convent to obey. I am young; my diſpoſition is gentle, and I am of a good conſtitution. When I recover my ſtrength, it will be amply ſufficient for every kind of domeſtic employment. I can embroider, ſew,

and

and waſh. When I lived in the world, I uſed to make up my own lace, and I will ſoon recover the habit. I am not awkward, and I can apply to every thing. If it were neceſſary to learn to dreſs hair, I am not deficient in taſte, and could ſoon acquire a knowledge of it. A tolerable ſituation, if poſſible, or a place, be what it may, is all I aſk. You may anſwer for my morals, Sir. In ſpite of appearances, I am pious. There was a well at the bottom of the garden of the convent I have quitted; a well upon which I have often gazed. All my ills had been ended, if God had not reſtrained me. Do not allow me, Sir, to be dragged back to this fatal houſe! Do me this ſervice, which I implore. It is a good work, which you will remember with ſatisfaction as long as you live, and which God will reward in this world or in the next. Above all, Sir, conſider that I live in continual alarm, and that I count the moments as they paſs. My relations cannot entertain a doubt of my being at Paris; they doubtleſs make every kind of enquiry to diſcover me; do not allow them to ſucceed in their ſearch. I brought away with me all my clothes. I ſubſiſt by my labour, and by the aſſiſtance I receive from a worthy woman, who was formerly my friend, and to whom you may direct your anſwer. Her name is Madam Madin. She lives at Verſailles. This good woman will furniſh me with whatever is neceſſary for my journey; and after I have obtained a place, I ſhall need nothing, and no longer be a burden upon her kindneſs. My conduct, Sir, will juſtify the protection which you may be pleaſed to grant me. Whatever may be the anſwer you give to my application, in the worſt event, I ſhall only lament the ſeverity of my fortune.

The following is Madam Madin's addreſs. *Madin, at the Pavillion de Bourgogne, Anjou Street, Verſailles.*

You

You will have the goodneſs to ſend two covers; her addreſs upon the one, and a croſs upon the other.

My God, with what anxiety do I wait your anſwer! I am in continual agony. Your very humble and moſt obedient ſervant,

(Signed) SUSAN DE MARRE.

We required an addreſs to receive his anſwers, and we choſe Madam Madin, the wife of an officer who had ſerved in the infantry, and who actually lived at Verſailles. She knew nothing of our trick, nor of the letters which ſhe made him write to herſelf in the ſequel, and for which we employed the hand-writing of another young perſon. Madam Madin only knew that it was neceſſary to receive, and to convey to me all the letters with the poſt-mark of Caen. As chance would have it, M. de Croiſmare, after his return to Paris, and about eight years after our ſin had been committed, met with Madam Madin one morning at the houſe of a lady of our acquaintance, who had been in the plot. It was a real theatrical ſcene. M. de Croiſmare expected to receive an infinite deal of information, with regard to the unfortunate perſon who had excited ſuch lively intereſt in his mind, and of whom Madam Madin knew not a ſingle word. This, accordingly, was the moment of our general confeſſion, and of our pardon.

Anſwer

Anſwer of the Marquis de Croiſmare.

MADEMOISELLE,

Your letter reached the very perſon you were in queſt of. You have not been miſtaken with regard to his ſentiments. You may leave town immedi diately for Caen, to be the waiting-maid of a young lady.

The lady, your friend, may write to me, that ſhe ſends a waiting-maid, ſuch as I deſire, with ſuch recommendation of your qualifications as ſhe thinks proper, without going into any particulars of your ſituation. She may fix alſo the name which you are to adopt, the conveyance you have taken, and, if poſſible, the day upon which you will arrive. If you take the coach for Caen, it ſets out from Paris, early on Monday morning, and reaches this place upon Friday. It departs from Paris, in Saint Dennis Street, from the Great Stag. If there is is no perſon to receive you upon your arrival at Caen, you will apply, in my name, at the houſe of M. Gaſſion, oppoſite the *Place Royal*, till you hear from me. As it is indiſpenſably neceſſary on both ſides that you ſhould remain unknown, it is proper that the lady, your friend, ſhould ſend me back this letter, on which, though without ſignature, you may moſt perfectly rely. Retain only the ſeal, which will ſerve you as an introduction to the perſon to whom you apply.

Obſerve, Mademoiſelle, exactly and diligently, what this letter preſcribes. To act with prudence, you ſhould encumber yourſelf neither with letters nor

nor papers, nor any thing elſe, which could produce a diſcovery. It will be eaſy to ſend them on a future occaſion. Rely, with the moſt perfect confidence, on the good intentions of your ſervant.

At....., near Caen, Thurſday, 6th February, 1760.

This letter was addreſſed to Madam Madin. There was upon the cover of the incloſed a croſs, according to agreement. The ſeal repreſented a Cupid, holding in one hand a flambeau, and in the other two hearts, with a device which was illegible, becauſe the ſeal had been injured in opening the letter. It was natural for the nun, who was unacquainted with love, to take it for her guardian angel.

Anſwer of the Nun to M. the Marquis of Croiſmare.

SIR,

I received your letter. I believe I have been ill, very ill. I am very weak. If it pleaſe God to take me to himſelf, I ſhall offer up inceſſant prayers for your ſafety. If I recover, I ſhall do every thing you command me. My dear Sir! generous man! I ſhall never forget your goodneſs.

My generous friend is expected from Verſailles; ſhe will communicate every thing to you.

Sunday, February.

I will preſerve the ſeal with care. It is a holy angel which the impreſſion repreſents; it is you, it is my guardian angel!

M. Diderot

M. Diderot being unable to attend the meeting of the club, this anſwer was ſent without his concurrence. He did not approve of it, and alledged, that it would diſcover our conſpiracy. He was miſtaken, and I think he was wrong in diſapproving of this anſwer. To ſatisfy him, however, we inſerted in the minutes of the common council of the impoſture, the following anſwer, which was *not* ſent. Beſides too, this illneſs was indiſpenſably neceſſary to poſtpone her departure for Caen.

EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES.

The foregoing is the letter which was ſent, and the following is that which Siſter Suſan ought to have written:

SIR,

I return you thanks for your goodneſs. I muſt no longer think of any thing; all will ſoon be over with me. Shortly I ſhall be in the preſence of the God of mercy; there I ſhall remember you. The phyſicians conſult whether they ſhall bleed me once more. They may do as they pleaſe. Adieu, my dear Sir; I hope the abode to which I am going, will be happier than this; one day we ſhall meet there.

Letter of Madam Madin to M. the Marquis Croiſmare.

I am by her bed ſide, and ſhe urges me to write to you. She has been in the laſt extremities, and my ſituation, which confines me to Verſailles, has prevented

prevented me from coming ſooner to her aſſiſtance. I knew that ſhe was very ill, and totally deſolate in the world; and yet I could not leave my charge. You may eaſily conceive, Sir, that ſhe has ſuffered a great deal. She has received a fall, which ſhe concealed. She was ſuddenly attacked with a violent fever, the progreſs of which it was impoſſible to check, but by frequent bleedings. I believe ſhe is now out of danger. At preſent I am chiefly apprehenſive leſt her recovery be tedious, and that ſhe will not be able to ſet out for a month or ſix weeks; ſhe is already ſo weak, and ſhe muſt ſtill be farther reduced. Endeavour then, Sir, to obtain ſome delay, and let us jointly exert ourſelves to ſave the moſt unfortunate and the moſt intereſting creature in the world. I am unable to deſcribe the effect which your note produced upon her. She wept much; ſhe wrote the addreſs of M. Gaſſion in her pocket-book; and then ſhe would write to you in ſpite of her weakneſs. She had then juſt recovered from a criſis of the fever; I know not what ſhe has ſaid to you, for her poor head was then not quite in order. Excuſe me, Sir, I write this in haſte. I pity her extremely, but it is impoſſible for me to remain here many days together. You will receive the letter you wrote her. I ſend one nearly ſuch as you require. I do not mention in it her ornamental accompliſhments. They are not conſiſtent with the ſituation into which ſhe is about to enter; and, in my opinion, ſhe muſt renounce them entirely, if ſhe wiſhes to remain unknown. In ſhort, Sir, all that I have ſaid of her is true. There is not a mother who would not be overjoyed to have ſuch a child. My firſt care, as you may ſuppoſe, was to place her in ſecurity; and that point is attained. I cannot reſolve to let her go till her health is perfectly re-eſtabliſhed, and

that

that cannot take place in leſs than a month or ſix weeks, as I have already had the honour to mention. To admit of this too, no accident muſt intervene. She preſerves the ſeal of your letter; it is kept in her prayer-book, and under her pillow. I have never ventured to tell her that it was not yours. I broke it as I opened your anſwer, and replaced it with mine. In the diſagreeable ſituation in which ſhe was placed, I could not hazard communicating your letter to her without having read it. I venture to requeſt from you a few lines to ſuſtain her hopes. They are the only hopes ſhe has left; and if they were to be cut off I would not anſwer for her life. If you would have the goodneſs to acquaint me with a few particulars of the houſe where ſhe is to go, I ſhould avail myſelf of them to tranquilliſe her mind. Be under no apprehenſion about your letters, they ſhall all be ſent back, as exactly as the firſt; and depend upon the perſonal intereſt I have in doing nothing inconſiderate. We ſhall conform to all your directions, unleſs you change your plan. Adieu, Sir. The dear unfortunate prays to God for you every moment her head permits.

I expect your anſwer, Sir, as before, at the Pavilion de Bourgogne, Anjou-ſtreet, Verſailles.

16*th February*, 1760.

Oſtenſible Letter of M. Madin, ſuch as the Marquis Croiſmare had required.

SIR,

The perſon whom I propoſe to ſend you, is called Suſan Saulier. I love her as if ſhe were my own child; you may, however, rely upon what I am

I am about to tell you as literally true, becauſe it is not my character to exaggerate. She has loſt both father and mother. She is well born, and her education has not been neglected. She is acquainted with all the little kinds of work which are learnt by thoſe who are clever, and who chooſe to be attentive. She ſpeaks little, but very well, and writes naturally. If the perſon, for whoſe ſervice ſhe is intended, wiſhed to make her read to her, ſhe reads admirably. She is of middling ſtature. Her ſhape is very good. As to her countenance, I have ſeldom ſeen one more intereſting. She may, perhaps, be thought too young, for I do not think ſhe is quite twenty-two years of age; but if ſhe is deficient in the experience of age, it is ſupplied by that of misfortune. She has a great deal of diſcretion, and an uncommon ſhare of judgement. I can anſwer for the innocence of her morals. She is pious, but not bigotted. She poſſeſſes a fund of eaſy natural wit, a mild gaiety of temper, and never is ill-natured. I have two daughters; and, if particular circumſtances did not prevent Mademoiſelle Saulier from ſettling at Paris, I ſhould ſeek no other governeſs for them, nor could I expect to find one ſo well qualified for the ſituation. I have known her from her infancy, and have never loſt ſight of her. She will leave this place amply ſupplied with clothes. I will undertake the little expences of her journey, and alſo thoſe of her return, if ſhe ſhould happen to be ſent back to me. This is the leaſt I can do for her. She has never been out of Paris; ſhe knows not where ſhe is going; ſhe thinks herſelf loſt; and I have the utmoſt difficulty in ſupporting her ſpirits. A few lines from you, Sir, giving ſome account of the perſon ſhe is to ſerve, the houſe in which ſhe is to live, and the buſineſs ſhe will have to perform, will have

more effect upon her mind than all I can ſay. I hope, in aſking this favour, I do not treſpaſs too much upon your goodneſs. Her whole fear is that ſhe will not give ſatisfaction. The poor child is but little acquainted with her own qualifications.

I have the honour to be, with all the ſentiments which you deſerve,

Sir,

Your very humble
and moſt obedient ſervant,

(Signed) MOREAU MADIN.

Paris, 16th *February*, 1760.

Letter of the Marquis Croiſmare to Madam Madin.

MADAM,

Two days ago I received a few lines, acquainting me with the indiſpoſition of Mademoiſelle***. Her misfortunes inſpire me with the moſt poignant ſorrow, the ſtate of her health diſtreſſes me extremely. May I aſk of you the conſolation of being informed of her ſituation; the line of conduct ſhe intends to purſue, in a word, an anſwer to the letter I wrote her? From your politeneſs, and the intereſt you take in her concerns, I preſume to hope that you will not refuſe me that ſatisfaction.

Your moſt humble
and obedient ſervant.

Caen, 17*th February*, 1760.

Another Letter from the Marquis Croiſmare to Madam Madin.

I was extremely impatient to hear from you, Madam; and, happily, your letter has ſuſpended my uneaſineſs with regard to the ſituation of Mademoiſelle***, whom you aſſure me is now out of danger, and ſafe from all enquiries. I wrote to her, and you may give ſtill farther aſſurances of the continuance of my ſentiments. Her letter ſtruck me; and, in the critical ſituation in which I ſaw ſhe was placed, I thought I could not do better than ſettle her in my own family, in placing her with my daughter, who, unfortunately, has loſt her mother. This, then, Madam, is the family in which I intended to provide for her. I can depend upon myſelf, and upon my attention to ſoothe her ſufferings, without allowing the ſecret to eſcape, which, perhaps, would be more difficult in other hands. I cannot but lament both her ſituation, and that my fortune does not permit me to do her all the ſervice I deſire. But what can we do when we are controuled by the law of neceſſity? I live two leagues from the town, in a very pleaſant country houſe, where I paſs the time, very retired, with my daughter and my eldeſt ſon, who is a youth of feeling, and of religion; to whom, however, I ſhall communicate nothing which regards her ſituation. As to the domeſtics, they are all people who have been long in my ſervice, ſo that my ſituation is very calm and tranquil. I muſt farther add, that the alternative I now propoſe is only to be conſidered as a reſource in caſe nothing elſe ſhall offer. If any thing better ſhould occur, I do not mean

mean to conſtrain her by any engagement. But ſhe may depend upon it, that ſhe ſhall ever find in me a certain reſource. Thus ſhe may endeavour to re-eſtabliſh her health without uneaſineſs.—I ſhall wait till that is accompliſhed, and in the mean time I ſhall be extremely happy to hear of her frequently.

I have the honour to be,
Madam,
Your very humble
and moſt obedient ſervant.

Caen, February 21ſt, 1760.

Letter of the Marquis of Croiſmare to Siſter Suſan. (Upon the cover was a Croſs.)

Nobody, Mademoiſelle, is more ſenſibly affected than I am, by the ſituation in which you are placed. I am the more and more impelled to exert myſelf, in order to procure you ſome conſolation amidſt the misfortunes by which you are purſued.—Reſume the tranquillity of your mind, and endeavour to recover your ſtrength, and rely with the moſt perfect confidence upon my ſentiments. Your only object of attention ſhould be to re-eſtabliſh your health, and to remain unknown. Were it in my power to alleviate your misfortunes, I would do it with pleaſure. But your ſituation conſtrains me, and I can only lament the hard law of neceſſity. The perſon for whom I intend you, is one whom I hold moſt dear; and you will be chiefly under my own ſuperintendance. Thus, as much as poſſible, it ſhall be my care to ſoften the little hardſhips, inſeparable from the ſtation you are to occupy. You will give me all your confidence, and I will repoſe entirely upon your attention.

This aſſurance ought to calm your mind, and prove my ſentiments; and the ſincere attachment with which I am, Mademoiſelle, your very humble and moſt obedient ſervant.

Caen, 21 *Feb.* 1760.

I wrote to Madam Madin, who can give you farther information.

Letter from Madam Madin to the Marquis de Croiſmare.

SIR,

The recovery of our dear invalid is now aſſured: the fever, and the diſorder in the head, are quite gone; there is every ſymptom of a ſpeedy and complete convaleſcence. Her lips are ſtill a little pale, but her eyes reſume their wonted luſtre. The colour begins to return into her cheeks; her fleſh has regained its freſh appearance, and will not be long in acquiring firmneſs; every thing goes well ſince the tranquillity of her mind was reſtored. It is now, Sir, that ſhe feels the value of your kindneſs; and nothing can be more affecting, than the way in which ſhe expreſſes her ſenſe of it. I ſhould wiſh to be able to deſcribe to you what paſſed between us, when I delivered to her your laſt letters. She took them, her hands trembled; ſhe breathed with difficulty as ſhe read them; ſhe ſtopped at the end of every line, and throwing herſelf upon my neck, while ſhe ſhed a flood of tears, ſhe ſaid to me, *Well, Mama Madin, then God has not forſaken me, he ſtill intends that I ſhall be happy. It is God who inſpired me with the idea of applying to this dear Gentleman: who in the world, except himſelf, would have taken pity upon me? Let us thank Heaven for its firſt*

favours,

favours, in hopes that it will ſtill confer more. She then ſat down upon her bed, and began to pray; and afterwards returning upon ſome paſſages in your letter, ſhe ſaid: *It is his daughter that he entruſts to me! Ah! mama, ſhe will reſemble him; ſhe will be gentle, munificent, and charitable like him.* After pauſing a little, ſhe proceeded with ſome emotion: *She has no mother! I regret that I do not poſſeſs all the experience which would be neceſſary for taking ſuch a charge. I know nothing, but I will do my beſt; I will recall, night and morning, what I owe to her father: gratitude will ſupply many defects. Will it be long before I get well? When will they permit me to eat? I don't feel any of the effects of my fall; none at all.* I go through this ſhort detail, Sir, becauſe I hope that it will pleaſe you. She diſplayed, in her converſation and manner, ſo much innocence and warmth, that I was almoſt beſide myſelf. I know not what I would have given, that you could have ſeen and heard her. Yes, Sir, either I am blind, or you will have in her a girl of ten thouſand; one who will prove a bleſſing to your family. What you have had the goodneſs to inform me of yourſelf, Mademoiſelle your daughter; of little maſter, your ſon; and of your ſituation; correſponds entirely with her wiſhes. She perſiſts in the firſt propoſitions ſhe made to you. She aſks only food and cloathing; and if it is agreeable to you, you may take her at her word: though I am not rich, the reſt will be my concern. I love this child, I have adopted her in my heart; and the trifle which I have hitherto ſpared her out of my income, ſhall be continued after my death. I will not conceal from you that the words, *her laſt reſource, and leaving her at liberty to accept of a better ſituation, if an opportunity offers,* made her uneaſy; I was not

ſorry at finding her poſſeſſed of this meaſure of delicacy. I ſhall not fail to inform you of her progreſs in convaleſcence; but I have a grand ſcheme in agitation, and I do not deſpair of its ſucceeding, after her health is re-eſtabliſhed, if you recommend me to one of your friends; you muſt have a great many here. He muſt be a prudent, intelligent, clever man, not of too much conſideration, who has acceſs, either through himſelf or friends, to ſome great people, whom I ſhall name, and who can have admiſſion to Court, without belonging to it. From the way in which the plan is arranged in my mind, it will not be neceſſary that he be made a confident; he may ſerve us without knowing how; and even though my attempt ſhould turn out to be fruitleſs, we ſhall derive the advantage from it, of making it believed that ſhe is in a foreign country. If you can recommend me to ſome perſon, I beg that you will mention his name, and where he lives; you can afterwards write to him, that Madam Madin, whom you have known for a long time, will wait upon him to aſk him to do her a ſervice; and requeſt him to take an intereſt in the buſineſs, if it is practicable. I have only to add, that you may depend upon the intereſt that I take in our unfortunate girl, and upon ſome prudence, for which I am indebted to experience. The joy which your laſt letter occaſioned her, has a little raiſed her pulſe; but it will be nothing.

I have the honour to be, with ſentiments of the higheſt reſpect,

Sir,
Your very humble
and obedient ſervant,
(Signed) MOREAU MADIN.

Paris, 3d March, 1760.

The

The idea of Madam Madin applying for a recommendation to one of the friends of the generous protector of Sister Susan, was a suggestion of the Devil, by means of which his agents hoped to bring their friend insensibly from Normandy, to apply personally to me, and to make me a confident of the whole affair: the scheme perfectly succeeded, as will be seen from the rest of the correspondence.

Letter from Sister Susan, to M. the Marquis de Croismare.

SIR,

Madam Madin has delivered to me the two answers with which you have honoured me, and likewise has read to me part of the letter that you have written to her. I accept your offer. It is a hundred times better than I deserve; yes, a hundred, a thousand times better. I know little of the world; I have so little experience; and I am sensible of the vast deal it would require to render me worthy of your confidence; but I hope for your indulgence, in consideration of my zeal, and of my gratitude. My place will make me; and Mama Madin says, that it is better than if I were made for my place. My God! how impatient I am for my recovery, that I may go and throw myself at my benefactor's feet, and serve him, by being of all the use I can to this dear girl! They tell me that it will be a month before I get well. A month! That is a long time. My dear Sir, preserve your kindness for me. I am transported with joy; but they do not wish that I should write; they will not permit me to read; they keep me in bed; they'll give me nothing but barley water; they famish me; and all for my good.

God be praiſed! it is not, however, with my inclination that I obey.

I am, with a grateful heart,
Sir,
Your moſt obedient,
and very humble ſervant,
(*Signed*) SUSAN SAULIER.

Paris, March 3*d*, 1760.

Letter from M. the Marquis de Croiſmare to Madam Madin.

Some ailments, to which I have been ſubjected for a few days, have prevented me, Madam, from anſwering you ſooner, and expreſſing the pleaſure I felt at being informed of the convaleſcence of Mademoiſelle Saulier. I hope it will ſoon be in your power to inform me of the perfect re-eſtabliſhment of her health, tidings to which I look forward with anxiety. But I am mortified at not having it in my power to contribute to the execution of a ſcheme in her favour, that you have in contemplation, and which, without knowing what it is, I am ſure is an excellent one, from the prudent management of which you are capable, and the intereſt you take in her welfare. I am very little known at Paris, and only among a few, as little known as myſelf; acquaintances, ſuch as you deſire, are not eaſily to be found. Continue, I beſeech you to ſend me accounts of Mademoiſelle Saulier, whoſe intereſts ſhall always be moſt dear to me.

I have the honour to be,
Madam,
Your moſt obedient humble ſervant,

March 13, 1760.

Anſwer

Anſwer of Madam Madin to M. the Marquis of Croiſmare.

SIR,

I was to blame, perhaps, in not explaining myſelf upon the project which I have conceived, but I was exceedingly preſſed in point of time. The following is the outline of what ſtruck me. In the firſt place, you muſt know, that the Cardinal de Fleury, protected the family. By his death, they all loſt a very valuable friend, particularly my Suſan, who had been preſented to him in her infancy. The old Cardinal being fond of beautiful children, Suſan's grace did not fail to ſtrike him, and accordingly he took the charge of her fortune. But when he died, they diſpoſed of her in the way of which you have been informed; and her protectors thought that they diſcharged their duty to the youngeſt, by marrying her eldeſt ſiſters to two creatures of their own; one of whom has an office of ſome conſideration at Alby, the other the receipt of the cuſtoms at Caſtries, three leagues from Montpelier. They are of a mercileſs diſpoſition, but they hold their ſituations at the good will of thoſe by whom they were placed in them. I have thought then, that if one had ſome mode of acceſs to Madam the Marchioneſs of Caſtries, whoſe name is Fleury, and who took an active part in my child's proceſs, and if the melancholy ſituation of a young perſon, expoſed to all the conſequences of miſery in a foreign and diſtant country, was repreſented to her, that this lady, who has a great character for compaſſion, might intereſt herſelf with her huſband, or with the Duke of Fleury, her brother, and that we might be able, through their interference, to procure her a ſmall annuity from her two brothers-in-law, who have got all the property of the family, and who have no intention

of giving any ſhare of it to poor Suſan, I really think, Sir, the plan is worthy the ſerious conſideration of us both With this ſmall penſion, together with what I have ſettled upon her, and what ſhe may receive from your goodneſs, ſhe would be very well for the preſent, and tolerably provided for the future; ſo that I could part with her with the leſs regret. But, I know neither M. the Marquis de Caſtries, nor his lady, nor any perſon connected with them; and it was the child who ſuggeſted to me the idea of apply to you. I have only to add, that her convaleſcence does not advance ſo rapidly as I could wiſh. She was hurt about the reins, as I believe I have told you: the pain of her fall, which has gone for ſome time, has returned; it comes and goes. It is accompanied with a ſlight ſhivering, but her pulſe does not indicate the ſmalleſt ſymptoms of a fever. The phyſician ſhakes his head, and has not an air which pleaſes me. She is going to maſs next Sunday; ſhe wiſhes it, and I have ſent her a large cloak, which will completely cover her; under which I think ſhe may paſs half an hour, without danger, in a ſmall church. She ſighs for the moment of her departure; and I am ſure ſhe prays for nothing with greater fervour, than the completion of her cure, and a continuance of the kindneſs of her benefactor. If ſhe is able to travel between Eaſter and Low Sunday, I ſhall not fail to let you know. Her abſence would not obſtruct my endeavours to diſcover, among my acquaintances, ſome one who may have intereſt with Madam de Caſtries, or her huſband.

I am, Sir, with infinite reſpect,

Your moſt obedient

and very humble ſervant,

(Signed) MOREAU MADIN.

Verſailles, March 25, 1760.

P. S.

P. S. I have forbidden her to write to you, for fear of importuning you; no other conſideration would have prevented her.

Letter from M. the Marquis de Croiſmare to Madam Madin.

MADAM,

Your ſcheme in favour of Mademoiſelle Saulier appears to be very commendable; and it pleaſes me the more, becauſe I eagerly wiſh to ſee her, in her misfortune, placed in a ſituation a little paſſable. I do not deſpair of finding ſome friend to intereſt himſelf with Madam de Caſtries; but it will require time and ſome precautions, as well for the purpoſe of avoiding a diſcloſure of the ſecret, as to aſcertain the prudence of the perſon to whom I apply. Be aſſured I ſhall not loſe ſight of it; in the mean time, if Mademoiſelle Saulier perſeveres in the ſame ſentiments, and if her health is ſufficiently re-eſtabliſhed, let nothing prevent her from ſetting out; ſhe will find my diſpoſitions towards her always the ſame with thoſe which I have already manifeſted, and my zeal to ſweeten if poſſible the bitterneſs of her lot unabated. The ſituation of my affairs, and the misfortunes of the times, have obliged me to retire to the country, for the ſake of economy, ſo that we live in the greateſt ſimplicity. Mademoiſelle Saulier, therefore, need put herſelf to very little expence in dreſs, as common things will do for the country. It is in this ruſticated ſimple ſtate that ſhe will find us, and where I hope notwithſtanding the frugality I am obliged to obſerve, ſhe will experience ſome pleaſure and comfort. You will have the goodneſs, Madam, to inform me of her departure; and in caſe ſhe has miſlaid my addreſs

addreſs, it is, M. Gaſſion, oppoſite the *Place Royale, at Caen.* If, however, I am informed of the time of day at which ſhe will arrive, ſhe will find ſome perſon to conduct her here without ſtopping.

I have the honour to be,
Madam,
Your very humble
and moſt obedient ſervant.

March 31, 1760.

Letter of Madam Madin, to M. the Marquis de Croiſmare.

If ſhe perſevere in the ſame ſentiment, Sir! How can you entertain a doubt of it? What can ſhe do better than to go and paſs her days in happineſs and tranquillity with a man of worth, and in the ſociety of a genteel family? Is ſhe not too happy in being the object of your regard? and where would ſhe lay her head, were ſhe to be ſecluded from the aſylum which you have had the generoſity to offer her? Theſe are her own words, Sir, which, I am only repeating. She was obſtinate in wiſhing to go to maſs on Eaſter Sunday; it was contrary to my advice, which ſhe has ſuffered from not taking. She returned from church with a conſiderable fever upon her, and ever ſince that fatal day ſhe had been worſe. Sir, I cannot permit her to ſet off till her health is perfectly reſtored. There is now a good deal of heat about her reins, at the place where ſhe was hurt by the fall; I have been inſpecting it but I can perceive nothing. Her phyſicians told me the day before yeſterday, as we went down ſtairs together, that he was afraid that a ſuppuration was beginning; but that he muſt wait to ſee how it would turn out. She does

does not want appetite however; ſhe ſleeps, and does not fall much away. I now and then obſerve a little more colour in her cheeks, and a little more vivacity in her eyes than is natural to them; and then her impatience diſtreſſes me. She riſes, ſhe tries to walk; but whenever ſhe leans a little to the weak ſide, there is a cry which is enough to pierce one's heart. I have hopes of her, notwithſtanding; and I ſhall employ the mean time in arranging her little wardrobe.—It conſiſts of

A robe of Engliſh callimanco, which ſhe can wear ſingly while the warm weather laſts, and which ſhe may line for the winter with another of blue cotton which ſhe now wears.

Five ſhifts with furnitures, ſome of cambric, and the reſt of muſlin. About the middle of June I ſhall ſend her a piece of linen which is now bleaching at Penlis, to make ſix more.

Some white petticoats, of which two are dimity flounced with muſlin.

Two wrappers of the ſame pattern, which I had made for my youngeſt daughter, and which fit her exactly. They will ſerve for dreſſing gowns.

Some corſets, aprons, and neck-handkerchiefs.

Two dozen of pocket-handkerchiefs.

Some night-caps.

Six night-gowns, with eight pairs of ſingle and three pairs of double ruffles.

Six pairs of fine cotton ſtockings.

This is all with which I have been able to provide her. I carried them to her this morning, and I cannot tell you with what ſenſibility ſhe received them. She inſpected one thing, ſhe tried on another, ſhe graſped my hands and kiſſed them: ſhe could not refrain from crying when ſhe ſaw my daughter's wrappers. What makes you cry? I ſaid

I ſaid to her. Have you not always ſtood in that relation to me? *True*, replied ſhe, and then added, *Now that I hope to be happy, I think I ſhould be unwilling to die. Mama, how is it that this heat in my ſide will not go away? I wiſh they would put ſomething to it.* I am delighted, Sir, that you do not diſapprove of my plan, and that you ſee a probability of its ſucceeding. I leave every thing to your prudence; But I think it my duty to warn you that the Marquis de Caſtries is going to ſerve in the campaign: that as ſoon as he ſets out, Madam de Caſtries will go to her eſtate; and that in ſeven or eight months we ſhall be quite forgotten here. Every thing ſoon loſes its intereſt in this country; we are leſs ſpoken of already than we were; and in a ſhort time we ſhall not be ſpoken of at all. Don't be afraid that ſhe has miſlaid the addreſs you ſent her; ſhe never opens her prayer-book without looking at it; ſhe will ſooner forget the name of Saulier than that of M. Gaſſion. I aſked her if ſhe did not wiſh to write to you: ſhe replied, that ſhe had begun a long letter, which ſhe meant ſhould contain every thing which ſhe could leaſt diſpence with communicating to you, if God in his mercy was pleaſed to recover her, and bring you together; but that ſhe had a pre-ſentiment that ſhe could never ſee you. *This complaint*, added ſhe, *is of too long duration; I ſhall never profit from your goodneſs nor from his; either the Marquis will change his mind, or I ſhall not recover.* What folly, ſaid I! Do you know that if you entertain theſe gloomy ideas, what you are afraid of will come to paſs? She ſaid, *The will of the Lord be done!* I requeſted her to ſhew me what ſhe had written: it frightened me; it was a volume. There, ſaid I to her, ſomewhat angry, is what kills you. She anſwered, *What would you have me do?*

do? I am either afflicted with pain or with ennui. And when have you been able to ſcribble all this? *A little at one time and a little at another. Whether I live or die, I wiſh him to know what I have ſuffered.* —I have forbidden her to continue it. Her phyſician has backed my prohibition. I pray you, Sir, to join your authority to my entreaties; ſhe will conſider you as her maſter, and will obey you as ſuch. As I conceived, however, the time to hang heavy upon her, and that it was neceſſary that ſhe ſhould be employed, was it only to prevent her from perſiſting in writing, muſing, and fretting; I propoſed that ſhe ſhould tambour a veſt for you. The idea pleaſed her exceedingly, and ſhe has begun the work. God grant that ſhe may have time to finiſh it here! One word, if you pleaſe, forbidding her to write or to work too much. I had reſolved to return to night to Verſailles, but I am uneaſy; the ſuppuration frightens me, and I wiſh to be with her to-morrow, when her phyſician returns. I have unfortunately ſome faith in the preſentiments of the ſick; they are ſenſible of their own ſituation. When I loſt M. Madin, all the phyſicians aſſured me that he would recover; he ſaid himſelf he never ſhould recover, and the poor man ſpoke what was but too true. I ſhall remain with her, and ſhall have the honour to write to you; if I loſe her, I think I ſhall never get the better of it. You will be happy, Sir, in never having ſeen her. Now the wretches who determined her to make her eſcape, are ſenſible of their loſs, but it is too late.

I have the honour to be with ſentiments of reſpect and gratitude, both on her account and my own.

Sir,

Your very obedient humble ſervant,

(Signed) MOREAU MADIN.

Paris, April 13, 1760.

Anſwer

Anſwer of M. the Marquis de Croiſmare to Madam Madin.

I ſhare, Madam, with real ſenſibility, your uneaſineſs reſpecting the illneſs of Mademoiſelle Saulier. Her unfortunate ſituation always gave me infinite concern; but the details which you have had the goodneſs to ſend me, prejudice me ſo much in her favour, that I cannot help feeling a moſt lively intereſt in every thing which relates to her: ſo far am I from having changed my ſentiments upon this ſubject, that I beſeech you to take the trouble of repeating to her thoſe which I expreſſed in my letters, and which will never undergo any alteration. I have thought it prudent not to write to her, that ſhe may have no occaſion for making any reply. Every kind of exertion muſt, no doubt, be prejudicial in her preſent infirm ſtate; and, if I had any power over her, I would employ it in reſtricting her. There is no perſon fitter than you, Madam, to acquaint her with my opinion upon this head. Not that I am not charmed at receiving accounts from herſelf; but I cannot approve in her an action of pure complaiſance, which may contribute to retard her recovery. The intereſt which you, Madam, feel in her welfare, renders it unneceſſary for me to requeſt of you to moderate her exertions. You may believe me to be with the moſt ſincere affection for her, and with particular eſteem and high reſpect for your character,

Madam,

Your very humble

and obedient Servant.

April 25, 1760.

P. S. I have this moment written to one of my friends, by whom you can have acceſs to Madam de Caſtries. He is a Mr. Grimm, Secretary to the Duke of Orleans; he lives in the *Rue Neuve*, Luxembourg, near the Rue Saint Honoré, at Paris. I informed him that you would take the trouble to call at his houſe, repreſented to him the great obligation under which I lie to you, and expreſſed a ſtrong deſire of manifeſting my gratitude. He uſually dines from home.

Letter of Madam Madin to M. the Marquis de Croiſmare.

Oh! Sir, what have I ſuffered ſince I had the honour of writing to you! I cannot think of making you a partner of my pain; and I hope you will take it kind that I have not ſubjected your ſuſceptible heart to a trial ſo ſevere. You know how dear ſhe is to me. Conceive then, Sir, what I muſt have felt at ſeeing her near five hours concluding her life in the moſt acute pain. At length I think God has taken pity upon her and upon me. The poor unfortunate ſtill lives, but it cannot be long. Her ſtrength is exhauſted; ſhe can hardly ſpeak or open her eyes. Patience is all that is left her. Were ſhe to loſe that, what would become of us? The hopes which I entertained of her recovery were extinguiſhed all of a ſudden. There is an abſceſs formed in her ſide, which has been making a ſecret progreſs ever ſince her fall. She would not ſuffer it to be opened in time; and when ſhe could have reſolved upon it, it was too late. She perceives her laſt moments approaching; ſhe inſiſts upon my leaving her; and I confeſs to

to you I am not able to witneſs the ſpectacle. The ſacrament was adminiſtered to her laſt night between ten and eleven. It was done at her own deſire. After this melancholy ceremony, I remained alone by her bed-ſide. She heard me ſigh; ſhe ſought my hand; I gave it her; ſhe took it, raiſed it to her lips, and pulling me to her, ſhe ſaid in a tone of voice ſo low that I could ſcarcely hear her, *Mama, one favour more.* What, my child? *Give me your bleſſing, and go away.* She added, *M. the Marquis ..... do not fail to thank him.* Theſe words will be her laſt. I have left orders, and retired to a friend's houſe, where I am waiting in momentary expectation. It is one o'clock in the morning. Perhaps we have now a friend in Heaven.

I am with reſpect, Sir,

Your moſt obedient humble ſervant,

(Signed) MOREAU MADIN.

This ſucceeding letter was due the 7th of May; but it was not dated.

Letter of Madam Madin to M. the Marquis de Croiſmare.

The dear child is no more; her pains are at an end, and ours have ſtill perhaps a long time to laſt. She departed from this world to that whither we muſt all follow her, on Wedneſday laſt, between three and four of the morning. As her life had been innocent, ſo her laſt moments were tranquil, notwithſtanding all that happened to diſturb them. Permit me to thank you for the tender intereſt you took in her fortune, it is the only duty which I have now

now to perform to her. Encloſed are all the letters with which you have honoured us. I have kept ſome of them myſelf, and I have found the reſt among ſome papers which ſhe delivered to me a few days before ſhe died, and which ſhe told me contained the hiſtory of her life, at her parents, and in the three convents in which ſhe lived, and of what had paſſed ſince her eſcape. It is not probable that I ſhall read them ſoon; I cannot ſee any thing which belonged to her, nor any thing which even my friendſhip had deſtined for her, without awakening the moſt pungent ſorrow.

If ever I can be ſo happy, Sir, as to be uſeful to you in any way, I ſhall be much flattered by your remembrance of me. I am, with thoſe ſentiments of reſpect and gratitude which are due to kindneſs and compaſſion,

SIR,
Your moſt obedient humble ſervant,

(Signed) MOREAU MADIN.

May 10, 1760.

Letter of M. the Marquis de Croiſmare, to Madam Madin.

I know, Madam, what it coſts a tender and benevolent heart to loſe the object of its attachment, and the happy opportunity of diſpenſing favours, the rightful claim of misfortune and amiable qualities, ſuch as thoſe poſſeſſed by the dear young lady who is now the cauſe of our regrets. I ſhare your ſorrow, Madam, with the moſt tender ſenſibility. You knew her, and this renders your ſeparation the more cruel. Without having had that good fortune, her misfortunes touched me with the moſt lively

lively ſympathy, and I taſted in anticipation, the pleaſure of being able to contribute to the tranquillity of her days. If Heaven had ordered it otherwiſe, and deprived me of that ſatisfaction ſo much deſired, I bow to its deſires, but I cannot be inſenſible to the loſs I have ſuſtained. You have at leaſt the conſolation to have acted from motives the moſt noble, in a manner the moſt generous. I have admired your conduct, and my ambition has been to imitate it. I have only to expreſs the ardent wiſh I feel to be honoured with your acquaintance, and of having an opportunity of telling you in perſon, how much I have been enchanted with your greatneſs of ſoul, and with that reſpectful conſideration I have the honour to be,

Madam,

Your moſt humble

and ever devoted ſervant,

May 18, 1760.

Whatever reſpects the memory of our unfortunate, is become extremely precious. Will it not be too great a ſacrifice to aſk of you to tranſmit to me, the ſhort memoirs which ſhe has written of her various misfortunes? I requeſt this favour of you, Madam, with the greateſt confidence, that you have told me I have ſome right to them. I ſhall be punctual in returning them, as well as all your letters, if you think proper, by the firſt opportunity. You will have the goodneſs to ſend them by the driver of the Caen waggon, who lodges at the *Grand Cerf, Rue St. Denis, Paris*, and who ſets out every Monday

THUS

THUS ends the hiſtory of the unfortunate Suſan de la Marre, called Saulier. It is a great pity that the memoirs of her life had not been extended into a regular hiſtory: they would have formed a very intereſting narrative. After all, M. the Marquis de Croiſmare is much obliged to the perfidy of his friends, for having furniſhed him with an opportunity of ſuccouring misfortune, with a nobleneſs, an intereſt, and a ſimplicity, truly worthy of him; the part which he acts in this correſpondence, is not the leaſt affecting of the romance.

We may, perhaps, be blamed for haſtening the death of Siſter Suſan with very little humanity; but it became neceſſary, from information we had received from the caſtle of Laſſon, that they were fitting up an apartment for the reception of Mademoiſelle de Croiſmare; and that her father intended to take her out of the convent where ſhe had lived ſince her mother's death. Our information further ſtated, that they expected a woman from Paris, to act, in the mean time, as governeſs for the young lady; and that M. de Croiſmare was endeavouring otherwiſe to provide for the good woman who had hitherto had the care of his daughter. Theſe advices left us no alternative; and neither the youth, nor the beauty, nor the innocence of Siſter Suſan, nor her gentle, ſuſceptible, and tender heart, capable of melting thoſe even who were leaſt inclined to compaſſion, could ſave her from the ſtroke of death. But as we have adopted all the ſentiments of Madam Madin for this intereſting creature, the regret which we feel in conſequence of that event, is no leſs lively than that of her reſpectable protector.

THE END.